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DETECTIVE ZACH, the Broadway Spotter.

BY CAPTAIN HOWARD HOLMES,

AUTHOR OF "THE DARK LANTERN DETECTIVE," "THE NEVER-FAIL DETECTIVE," "CAPTAIN HERCULES," ETC., ETC.



ZACH ZEBEDEE FOUND HIMSELF TORN LOOSE FROM HIS PRISONER, AND HE SPRUNG UP WITH THE MANACLE DANGLING FROM HIS WRIST.

Detective Zach, THE BROADWAY SPOTTER;

OR,

The One-Handed Sport's Double Dilemma.

A Tale of the Mysteries of a Great City.

BY CAPTAIN HOWARD HOLMES,
AUTHOR OF "CAPTAIN COLDGRIP" NOVELS,
"HERCULES GOLDSPUR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AN AFTER-THE-THEATER MYSTERY.

It was exactly half-past eleven one night in May when one of the most fashionable playhouses in New York threw wide its doors to let out its patrons.

Among the first to come out were a couple who walked direct to a certain cab which stood in the gutter, and the gentleman handed his partner in with a great deal of gentility.

In another instant the cab door had closed upon them and the vehicle rattled off at a good gait. The man on the box seemed to know where to drive his fares, for he went off without having received any instructions from the gentleman and in the course of half an hour he pulled up in front of a house on a prominent street.

Throwing down the lines, the driver sprang from the box and opened the door. He awaited till the gentleman had helped his companion up the steps and had seen her in the mansion, when he came back, re-entered the cab and was driven off again.

Nothing would have been thought of these events, if the maid attached to the house had not found her mistress dead in the parlor, to which she seemed to have retired after coming home from the play.

She was found sitting in her favorite chair which she had drawn up to her mahogany writing table, but the hands which evidently intended to indite something had failed to do the bidding of the brain, for the inkstand was found open and a sheet of paper had one scrawling line which, to the maid at least, was undecipherable, as if death had come sooner than the victim expected, and had kept back the secret which she might have written.

The alarm was given by the maid, who left the house for that purpose, and while she was gone the mansion was tenanted alone by the dead.

Rosa, the maid, came back with a policeman whom she found a square away and the two entered the parlor.

There they discovered things to be in the shape which the girl had reported them to the officer and that person went out after a brief survey and telephoned to Mulberry street.

By this time it was one in the morning and the street, quiet at all times, was like a graveyard.

The lamp standing near the house of the dead threw its glare upon the dark walls and drawn shutters, but the light could not penetrate to the room where the victim of sudden death still reclined in the chair, one hand resting on the table near the sheet of paper.

In such cases the police act promptly and in a short time a sergeant accompanied by a sleek, smooth-faced man rung the bell.

Patrolman Jenks was so convinced that murder had been committed, although he had seen no signs of it in the hasty examination he had made, that he had not thought of calling in a surgeon who had an office on the next street, but the sergeant had been more thoughtful, and when he arrived with the smooth-faced man, he informed Rosa that the police surgeon would be along in a few minutes.

He introduced the man who accompanied him as Mr. Zebedee, and the patrolman looked as if he had heard the name before, and Mr. Zebedee began to look into matters as if he was a man of some importance.

In less than ten minutes a buggy drove up to the house and the regular surgeon attached to the Police Department came in.

Doctor Kirby was a little man, inclined to be fussy over some things, but he was well versed in medicine and had studied toxicology in his youth.

He went direct to the woman dead at the table and made an examination, while Mr. Zebedee, who had taken Rosa to one side, was asking a few questions about her mistress.

All at once Doctor Kirby looked up at the sergeant and then threw an inquisitive glance toward Mr. Zebedee.

"Well, doctor?" said the sergeant who had watched the examination. "Is it a case for us?"

The little man shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"It's for him over there," he said with a nod toward Mr. Zebedee. "But I see he's busy and I won't disturb him for he knows what is what."

The following moment Mr. Zebedee came forward and stood at the doctor's side.

"This is something for you," said Doctor Kirby. "The lady has met a violent death. She has been poisoned, sir."

Rosa, the maid, overheard this sentence, which was spoken in a tone purposely lowered, and she sprang forward with a light cry.

"You don't mean to say that, sir? Why he would never have done it, for he is the very pink of gentility and ho—"

She stopped rather suddenly, for at that moment she caught Mr. Zebedee's eye, and in an instant she finished the sentence in another way.

"He will help you hunt down the hand that did it if you are right about her being poisoned."

"Who is she talking about?" asked the sergeant, directing his question at Mr. Zebedee.

"My dear mistress's friend, Mr. Kidlace," replied the maid. "He came home with her from the theater, as he nearly always does. I heard her come in, but did not go down immediately as she sometimes rests in the parlor here."

"You are quite sure Mr. Kidlace came home with her to-night, are you?"

"I am, for didn't I hear them talking a moment at the door and wouldn't I know his voice among a thousand?"

The men turned their attention to the dead woman again and Doctor Kirby gave some directions which the others carried out by carrying the body to another room, where they deposited it upon a bed, after which they retired.

Sergeant Mittens was left in charge of the house, and as Kirby went to his buggy he was accompanied by Mr. Zebedee.

"It's murder, Zach," he said, with one of his sidelong glances. "You must clear it up before you retire, as I hear you are going to."

"I am going out of the business," was the answer, "but I promise you, doctor, that I will get to the bottom of this mystery before I do."

They drove off together, and the detective, for Zach Zebedee was one of the best, a prince among his peers in that line, went home, where he shut himself up in a little room on the third floor of a house on Broadway.

"The girl is a good actress," he said. "She is playing a game as subtle as any I ever saw played by one of her sort. Let me look at it again."

He took from his pocket a bit of paper which he spread upon the table, and then drew from a drawer a strong magnifying glass. He then bent over his work and moved the glass back and forth over the paper as he studied the scrawl thereon.

He had brought to his lodgings the identical paper which the dead woman had left on the table, and the scrawl before him was the one found by him when he entered the scene of the crime.

Zach Zebedee worked with the glass till a curtain at one side of the room parted, and a boy half-dressed came out and looked at him with an amused smile on his face.

"Been in long, Zach?" asked the youth, who was not past fifteen, with freckles on his round cheeks, and a mass of red hair hanging almost to his shoulders.

"Not very, Hornets. Just got in. Didn't know you were in there. Must have been asleep."

"I got into a sort o' doze after I came back from the play."

"Oh, you have been taking in the theaters, have you?"

Hornets admitted that he had been dramatically inclined, and that he had taken a seat in the lower gallery, from which he had a good view of the dress circle.

"It wasn't worth much from a critical point of view," continued the boy as Zach smiled. "The heavy woman overdid the thing, and the villain wasn't no good. I don't like these society plays where they wear fine dresses and yawn, and I'd have left before the thing was out, only I waited hoping that the properties would fall down and kill Don Ignacio, I believe they called him."

"You weren't stuck on the Don, then, Hornets?"

"Not to any great extent. I wish you could have seen him, Zach. He was about as much like a don as a snake is like a hummin'-bird, and— But that's somethin' new, eh?" and Hornets, who had approached the detective's table, was looking at the scrawl and the magnifying-glass.

The ferret looked at the boy and pushed the paper toward him.

"Look at it, Hornets—take a squint at this through the glass and tell me what you make out of it."

The boy took the glass and moved it back and forth across the sheet, all the time covering the line, and for several minutes he seemed oblivious of even the detective's presence.

"That's about the sort o' writing old Simon used to make?" he said at last.

"Simon Sellers?"

"Soulless Simon as they call him. Many's the time I've seen him sit for hours making scrawls just like these which nobody could read unless he could."

"What did he make them for, Hornets?"

"Don't know; never could find out."

"But you're sure he made them?"

"I've seen him at it a thousand times."

"Do you know where I came across this writing, if writing it is?"

The boy shook his head.

"A dead woman left it on the table at which she died last night."

"Jehosaphat!" cried Hornets, falling back while his face grew white and his eyes enlarged.

"She is said to have left this paper on the table, but she was as dead as a door nail."

"Murdered, Zach?"

"It looks that way."

For a moment the eyes of Hornets which were preternaturally bright wandered back to the writing and became fixed on it for some time.

Suddenly he bent over it and examined it again.

"Well, it may be so, but at first sight I would have called it some of Soulless Simon's work."

The boy dropped into an empty chair and watched Zach Zebedee's face half a minute.

"Is it going to be a puzzler, Zach?" he asked.

"I don't know, Hornets, but it starts off well for a puzzler."

"Who is she?"

"Mrs. Totten—Denia Totten, if you care for the whole name, a widow occupying a house on N— street. She came home from the play to-night—"

"From what play?" interrupted the boy.

"You can see from this programme which we found on her person."

The detective took a piece of paper from his pocket and when he had spread it out on the table, Hornets ran back to his sleeping room and brought forth another programme which matched it.

"I was there, too," said the boy. "How was she dressed and who was with her?"

The detective described Mrs. Totten's garments and a queer exclamation rung from Hornets's throat.

"Didn't I see 'em down in the circle while the curtains were down? Didn't I watch 'em out o' curiosity, for she seemed actually afraid of him?"

"You don't mean that, Hornets?"

"Yes, I do, for whenever he looked away she would look at him and seem to be under a spell. It was better than the show."

"What was the man like?"

"He was a good-looking fellow, well-dressed, tall when he stood up, with a full beard which shone as if it was oiled, black eyes—I saw that every time I got a glimpse of his face—and a hand which he kept gloved during the play. Once I saw him look up at the gallery and then I saw that he wore a diamond pin which dazzled the eyes of us kids in the front row. That's the sort o' fellow she was with; and you say she's been murdered, Zach?"

"I saw her, and Kirby who made the examination, said it was murder."

"Was she stabbed?"

"No, poisoned."

"Well, that's what I think, too, for that man didn't look like a cut-throat, but he reminded me of a slick villain who would have been what you call a Borgia if he had lived a good many years ago."

CHAPTER II.

"PRINCE PETER."

THE sage remark put forth by Hornets occasioned no surprise on the part of the detective.

The boy was used to making remarks which did not fit his years, and all Zach Zebedee did was to look at him a moment and then down at the paper again.

"You're sure you saw the couple, Hornets?" was all he said.

"Certainly. I couldn't help watching them, seeing how the lady acted—just as if she was afraid of him. Are you going to bed?"

"No, I'm going out."

Hornets saw Zach put the paper in his pocket and the next minute he was the only occupant of the room.

"Queer that he'd kill her so soon after the play," said the boy to himself when he had seen the detective quit the place. "What if I go and tell Mother Doss?"

He seemed to reflect another second and then got his hat.

"It's early," he remarked, as he caught the strokes of a clock in the neighborhood. "But Mother Doss is an early bird and won't be surprised to see me drop in on her at this hour."

The detective's *protege* went out, locking the door behind him and tripped nimbly to the street below.

The morning had come and it was cool for one in the heart of May.

A stiff breeze came from the water and Hornets pulled himself together with a shrug as he started off.

Five blocks away he entered an open hallway and ran up a flight of steps which seemed to lead him to the clouds.

"One wouldn't think that Mother Doss could ever get 'way up here; but she's as nimble as a cat if she is old, and she knows how to get up high if any one does."

On one of the highest floors of the old rookery the boy stopped and rapped at a door just discernible in the dim light that prevailed.

There was the hasty shuffling of feet beyond the door and then the portal was pulled open, and Hornets looked into the weazened face of an old woman, but one whose eyes were as bright as diamonds.

"Zip, Mother Doss!" said Hornets as he sprung across the dirty threshold and turned to look at the woman whose eyes had followed him.

"What is it you, boy, at this time of day?" answered the old woman, leering at Hornets as he stood in the light of the lamp which burned on the rickety table.

"I'm the early bird what gits the worm," he said with a grin. "I don't insinuate at all, Mother Doss, that you're the worm what I'm after; but I'm the early bird all the same."

The old woman watched her early visitor a full minute, when, coming up to her, he touched her sleeve and went on:

"Zach's got a new case," said he. "It's a peculiar one—fine lady found dead at home after coming back from play. Poison, says the doctor. Do you hear it, Mother Doss? Poison! Woman as dead as the Roman Senate; poisoner at large and unknown unless—"

"Well, what are you going to say, Hornets."

"Unless the man in kids did it."

"Who's he?"

Mother Doss had taken a seat and with arms resting on the table, where the lamp showed them to be rather dirty, she was looking into the boy's face with eagerness and curiosity.

"Why, mebbe you don't know him, but I saw him with her at the theater last night and he seems to be the one who took her home."

"And who's she?"

"Zach calls her a Mrs. Totten—fine lady on N— street; but no better off than we will be one of these days when the coroner gets a look at us in an official capacity."

"And you came here at this hour to tell me this?" asked Mother Doss.

"Yes. I thought you'd like to hear it first-hand, and, then, I wanted to, ask a question which I hope you will answer without any prevarication as they say in some instances."

"What is it? You don't expect me to know anything about the two people you have been talking about?"

"That depends on what you know, Mother Doss."

Hornets settled back in the chair, eyed the nervous old woman a few moments and then said:

"Did you ever know a man named Prince Peter?"

If a bombshell had dropped from the ceiling Mother Doss would not have started more.

She almost sprung from her chair and for the next two minutes she stared at the boy with her eyes apparently ready to leap from her head.

"Now, don't get excited, Mother Doss," said Hornets with a peculiar smile. "I didn't intend to throw a dynamite bomb at you, therefore you needn't jump out of your skin. Prince Peter? Wasn't that the name of the man I saw here in this very room last winter the night I came in after my fall in the street?"

"I—I don't know what he did call himself."

"You are losing your memory. You will be an idiot in a few weeks if you keep on this way, and they'll come and lock you up with a lot of gibbering unfortunates. How would that sort o' change strike you, Mother Doss?"

The old woman near the sky seemed to pull herself together, and she leaned toward the boy who appeared to be watching something on the wall opposite instead of her.

He seemed to know that he was being regarded by a pair of very keen eyes while Mother Doss looked at him, for now and then a singular gleam lit up his eyes, and he drummed on the ragged knee of his pantalons.

"I have heard of Prince Peter," said the old woman at length.

"Lately, Mother Doss?"

"Not very."

Hornets turned abruptly and looked at her.

"Within the last two months, eh?"

"Perhaps."

"Please make sure of it, Mother Doss."

"I guess I have heard of him within that time."

"When was he here last?"

"See here. What are you driving at? You don't mean to say that Prince Peter killed the lady?"

"I don't mean to say anything that is not correct," was the boy's answer.

"Prince Peter is a gentleman—a man who would not do anything of the kind."

"He's a seraph what has lost his wings, or has laid them aside for the present."

Mother Doss did not seem to notice the sarcastic remark.

Suddenly the boy came toward her and the next moment he was leaning over the table with his eyes fastened upon the old woman, who in turn regarded him with a look of uneasiness.

"I was only going to say," began the boy, when he suddenly stopped and looked at the door, which had opened without noise sufficient to have startled an ordinary person.

A man had come in—a tall, good-looking fellow, well dressed, with a wiry figure, small hands, black eyes and a crease in his trousers.

"Here he is now," said Hornets, almost inaudibly as he glanced at Mother Doss who

was watching the man with a face whiter a good deal than her walls.

"Who is this?" asked the man, coming forward and fastening his eyes upon Hornets.

"I'm Hornets, Prince Peter. I'm a boy what comes here off and on to talk and consult with Mother Doss, an old friend and life long acquaintance."

"Is that so?"

The question was addressed by the man to the woman, who still eyed him.

"He drops in occasionally," she said.

"I rather like to have him come as he brings the news of the street and—"

"It's cheaper than a paper, eh, Mother Doss?"

The man grinned at the boy's wit and edged his way up to the edge of the table from which he looked at the old woman, whose uneasiness seemed to increase.

"Well, what's the latest, Prince?" asked Hornets.

In an instant the stern visage of the man was confronting him.

"Seems to me you have impudent callers," he said, looking at Mother Doss. "How far to the ground is it from yon window?"

This was a threat which the boy at once understood, but instead of springing from his chair to prevent Prince Peter from carrying it out, he seemed to settle deeper into it while he looked at the face of the dandy.

"This is the fourth story, so you can calculate the distance, Prince Peter. It wouldn't take a fellow of my size, for instance, long to get to the ground, but I don't think you'll ever throw me out the window."

"This beats all I ever listened to," and the dandy strode toward Hornets who neither moved nor lifted a hand.

He seemed to look the man over from head to foot.

"Is that the sort o' callers you have now, Mother Doss?" he asked. "Prince Peter, eh? Why, he wouldn't make a good sand-bag for the sheriff to practice on."

The man in the middle of the floor colored, but all at once he took a step toward Hornets and his hands reached out for the boy.

That instant the old woman leaped forward and her scrawny hands closed about Prince Peter's arm.

"Don't harm the boy," she said, looking into his face, now white and tensely drawn. "He's but a boy and I am under obligations to him. He lives with Zach Zebedee and—"

The name brought a cry from Prince Peter.

"The deuce he does!" he exclaimed. "Then he doesn't want to be hanging round here."

Hornets stood up and pushed back his chair.

"Sooner than have an altercation with the gentleman I'll withdraw," he said. "I'll see you later, Mother Doss."

He was at the door as he uttered the last words and Prince Peter, breaking from the old woman's grip, darted after him, but the boy was out of sight.

"What brought him here at this hour?" asked the man as he came back to the old woman.

"He had a bit of news. It was about a woman who has been found dead in her own house after coming from the theater."

"Who was she?"

"I think he called her Totten; he got his news from Zach Zebedee, the man he lives with."

"Do you know what Zebedee is?"

"Yes; he's a man-hunter, a detective."

"He's more than that."

"How?"

"Not now," said Prince Peter. "So a woman has been found dead in her chair at home after coming from the play? Totten, eh?"

"I believe that's what Hornets called her."

"Where did she live?"

"Somewhere on N— street."

"When did it happen?"

"Last night."

"And Zach Zebedee knows of it already?"

"Yes."

Prince Peter was silent for a moment, and then he went to the table and suddenly dropping into a chair buried his face in his hands.

Mother Doss watched him a full minute

and then went forward and touching him lightly bent over him.

"What do you know about her, Peter?" she asked. "There is some secret in your soul and it is connected with that woman or with her death. You must tell me your—"

He straightened that instant, pushing her back and overturning the chair in which he had sat, and the next moment he stood before her with blazing eyes and a strange quiver in his voice.

"Not another word! For God's sake keep back the word you were about to speak. Don't breathe it in my presence. So that man-hunter has come between me and fate? No, the shrewd clue-finder is fate itself! Wait, Mother Doss. I'm going out now, and when I come back 'Prince Peter,' as they call me, will be free again. Keep the boy-spy outside. If I find him here any more by heavens! I'll kill him, too!" and the closing door left the hag of Hoster street alone.

CHAPTER III.

BROADWAY ZACH AT WORK.

THE woman known as Mrs. Totten was at the time of her untimely death about thirty-five.

In figure she was shapely, and her face, while not beautiful, was strong and resolute, which, after hearing Hornets's story about her nervousness at the theater, in company with the man believed to be Captain Kid-lace, one would not know how to reconcile with those qualities.

She was believed to be a widow whose husband had been connected somehow with the army at the time of his death; but the truth of the matter is that Mrs. Totten was somewhat of a living mystery even to those admitted to her house.

She talked a good deal about foreign countries, mostly concerning a residence in Algiers, which gave out the belief that her husband had been a French officer stationed there.

She had dismissed a servant of Algerine extraction some weeks prior to her death and taken in Rosa who found her murdered in the parlor the night of the play.

Zach Zebedee, the Broadway Detective, discovered the facts about the change of servants before the next day and in a manner peculiar to himself.

After quitting his den in which he left Hornets, as we have seen, he made his way half-way across the city and turned up in what might be called an alley.

It was a little street very narrow and very dark and when once beyond the mouth of it, one could scarcely see the numbers on the door when they were not on the illuminated transoms.

The detective knocked at the door of as poor a house as there was on the alley and after some seconds, which seemed as many minutes, the portal was opened by a mere child who looked suspiciously at him and held the door open as if it was a mute invitation to enter.

Zach made his way through a darkened room and thence into one a little better lighted.

Rosa at the mansion had told him under silent protest as it seemed, a good deal about her mistress, and the ferret was merely following the clue which the maid had dropped.

This was what had brought him to the house in the alley.

As he entered the better room something with a human shape moved in one corner and the ferret stopped.

The face that came toward him was yellowish and foreign, as one could see even by the poor light which prevailed.

The figure was that of a man, but the body was as slender as a woman's, and there was something suggestively cat-like in the movement of the stranger.

Zach Zebedee took a seat and waited for the old man to speak.

The child had withdrawn and they were alone in the low-ceiled place.

As the dark-faced creature with the long fingers did not speak, the ferret opened the conversation.

"You've been in America some time, Fezzam?"

A slight nod was all that indicated that the question had been heard.

"You don't find many of your countrymen in this city?"

"Not many."

"But you find some?"

Another nod.

"And an Algerine lady now and then?"

A singular smile crossed the face of the listener and seemed to brighten it for a moment, but the darkness came and chased that ray afar.

"What became of the young girl who came from Algiers with the widow of the French officer?"

Old Fezzam seemed to draw back like the head of a turtle into the shell; but the next moment he came forth again and his eyes twinkled.

"She go back," said he.

"Back to her native land?"

"Yes."

"Of her own accord?"

Nod number three.

The Broadway ferret watched the face a moment and then laid his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Didn't the stranglers get her, Fezzam?"

"The Black Cord, you mean?"

"Yes."

"What they want her for?" he quickly asked.

"Come, old boy; you know a good deal more than you care to expose. You know all about the Black Cord and you know what became of Fuzilie. You saw her often; she has been here hearing what the cards have to say. You have looked into her hand and told her fortune. Did you tell her what the Black Cord was doing?"

The leathery face in front of the spotter seemed to change color for a moment, but it went back to its old hues.

Zach Zebedee knew his man. He had entered the old Algerine's house on another occasion and another trail, and he had cornered the yellow wretch, catching him in a falsehood, which was not hard to do when one once understood the old rascal.

Fezzam, on the borders of a century from the look of his skin, but young from the blackness and keenness of his eyes, turned away and put something hurriedly in his mouth.

The act was seen, but the detective did not betray himself.

He saw the lips close behind what the old man had taken, and then he noticed that a wonderful change took place again, the wrinkled face seeming to become fresher and the hands swelled up with their great veins.

The drug was working and he waited a moment longer.

"What became of her, Fezzam?" he asked, fixing his eyes upon the Algerine.

The old man with a start fell back in his chair and seemed to close his eyes, but Zach Zebedee saw that they were shining as brightly as ever behind the lids half open and he said:

"I want to know. Do you care to go down before the police?"

"I will not go!" and one of the hands darted toward the table near them and clutched a black-handled dagger which lay there.

"Then," said Zach, sternly, "you will tell me about Fuzilie."

"What you want to know for? What has the maid done?"

"Nothing, perhaps, but I want to know where she is."

"Now?"

"Now."

"What if she is on the sea?"

"Then I will find her for myself, or let her go on."

"What if she be in this city?"

"You will tell the truth, or the story of the Black Cord will come out."

Old Fezzam seemed on the verge of another lie, but something seemed to check him.

"Fuzilie may be dead."

"Then, where is her grave?"

Old Fezzam laughed.

"I never saw a man like you. Fuzilie doesn't want to see you."

"Perhaps not, but it is the other way—I want to see her."

The fortune-teller rose and crossed the room, his gait rather spry for one of his

years, and Zach who watched his every movement saw him lift a curtain behind which he vanished for half a minute.

It was barely the limits of that time when he reappeared with something in his hand and walking at his side was the little girl who had admitted the detective to the house.

She was bright and fairy-like in appearance; but her skin seemed transparent, and as she came forward her eyes got a lusterless expression which caught the detective's sympathy.

"You must ask Zulef, the child," said Fezzam, leading the child forward. "She shall talk for you and—"

"No! You shall not put the little one to that strange test which is sapping her life. It is slow murder, Fezzam. You shall tell me yourself for you know."

The detective reached out his hand and the little one would have run to his arms if the skinny hand of Fezzam had not pulled her back.

"It doesn't hurt her," said the old man. "She simply shuts her eyes and sees. She sees better than I can and better than the magic card can tell us what is going on in the outside world."

"But I'll not have it," reiterated the ferret. "You shall not kill the little one for me. Where is Fuzilie, the widows maid?—You know Fezzam."

It was like extracting blood from a turnip, but Zach Zebedee, who had dealt with all sorts and conditions of men, stuck to his idea and finally carried his point.

Fezzam at last dismissed the child with a gesture, but she lingered, looking at the detective as if, young as she was, she thought that some day Zach Zebedee would become not only her friend, but her protector.

"Now," said the detective, leaning toward the old man.

Fezzam drew his face into a strange contortion and crossed his lank limbs.

"Fuzilie is not to be found," said he.

"You mean that the Black Cord has dealt with her?"

"She is not to be found, I say. Isn't that enough?"

"She must be found! Very well. We will see what sort of story you tell at the office of the police."

Zach rose and looking at the old wretch, started toward the door; but a cry called him back.

"She is in this city," said Fezzam.

"Ah, that's a compromise, is it?" smiled Zach, pausing in the middle of the room; then he slowly came back and waited for Fezzam to go on.

"She is living in a nest on Cherry street."

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Give me the number."

Fezzam pretended to think a moment, then gave the detective a number of which Zack made mental note.

"That's better, Fezzam. You and I will become fast friends some day."

There was no reply and the old Algerine looked at the ferret as if he hated him for drawing from him what had been intended for a secret.

"Well, good-night, Fezzam. Be kind to the child. Don't work her to death at the black art which you practice for the little money you extract from your dupes. Thanks for the information you have so freely given me and now good-by."

Zach caught up the watchful child and lifted her to a level with his face.

Her face was suddenly pressed forward and for an instant her lips seemed glued to the shadow's ear.

"Don't!" said Zulef in a whisper. "Don't go to where Fuzilie is. Don't go. I like you. They will never let you see her, and, what is more, Fezzam has friends and spies who belong to the Cord."

It was a warning from the lips of a little angel; wonderful words from a precocious child, and as the detective put her down with a kiss, he turned and started for the door.

The sharp eyes of old Fezzam followed him; but he did not let him know that he was eager to quit the house, nor that he more than half believed the warning given by the child.

"It is a good long trip, but the bird may

fly if I don't net her now," said Zach to himself. "I must see Fuzilie—see her before day breaks over New York. She may hold the clue to the mystery."

In less than half an hour he found himself on Cherry street in the vicinity of the house designated by the Algerine.

It was still dark.

Here and there shone a light as the morning lamps flickered, and now and then the detective fell into shadows which seemed traps for the purpose of entrapping him.

He gained the front of the maid's house; he even mounted the steps, when something fell about his neck, and the following instant it seemed as if a red-hot iron was burning its way to his windpipe, and he realized that he had fallen into the clutches of the Black Cord.

And so near the needed clue at that!

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAPTAIN MAKES A "STATEMENT."

It was quite early in the morning after the death of Denia Totten in her elegant home, that Prince Peter made a call in a certain part of the city.

The good-looking young fellow was well attired, and as he rung the bell, the sunlight streaming over him showed his fine figure to advantage.

A colored man came to the door, and in answer to Prince Peter's inquiry said that "de cap'n" was up, and forthwith showed the caller into the house.

As if he had been there before, Prince Peter walked direct to a parlor and took a chair as he threw a hasty glance around the well-furnished room.

It betokened a great deal of wealth, and the young fellow seemed to smile as he looked at the fine paintings and other adornments of the place.

Presently the door opened and a man came in.

The moment he saw Prince Peter he came forward and shook the young man's hand.

"This is somewhat early, but I'm glad you've come. I have just heard about it. Terrible, wasn't it? And so sudden, too!"

Prince Peter said nothing for half a second, but he looked into the speaker's face as if studying it for a purpose.

"What are you going to do about it, captain?" he asked.

"Just what a gentleman should do under the circumstances," was the reply.

"You see I was the last man with her, according to general belief, and I have already prepared a statement which I intend to show to the superintendent of police this very morning. I am really glad you've dropped in, as I will submit the statement to you and get your valued judgment."

The speaker was the man known as Captain Kidlace, a man of enormous wealth as report had it, and one who lived at the top of the ladder so far as money went.

In person he was rather tall and handsome. There was a look of cunning about his intensely black eyes, and his hands which were small for a man of his build were never ungloved on the street.

It was believed that he kept a good many secrets from those who were known as his nearest friends; certain it was that the world at large knew little or nothing about Captain Kidlace, beyond the fact that he kept an elegant establishment which he sometimes abandoned for a run down the coast or a brief sojourn at some fashionable hotel.

When he had finished he unlocked a drawer and took out a lot of paper which he had tied with a drab string.

There were at least six sheets of foolscap covered, as Prince Peter could see, with the captain's chirography, and when the captain dropped into his chair and pushed a box of Havanas toward his caller, he began to read as follows:

To the SUPT. OF POLICE, New York City:—

"Having heard of the sudden death of Mrs. Denia Totten of No. 1263 N— street, this city, I deem it my duty, as the gentleman who accompanied her home from the theater the night of her taking off, to submit a statement to you, concerning that event.

"In the first place let me say that little of the past life of the deceased is known to me. I believe I met her for the first time in Lyons,

France, where she was visiting, a year after the death of Captain Totten, her husband, who was killed in an affair of honor in one of the French garrisons in Algiers. We came together in the course of travel and after our meeting in Lyons I did not see her again until I accidentally encountered her in this city some time since.

"The renewal of the acquaintance led to several visits to her mansion, and I have taken her to plays on more than once occasion previous to the last one. At the play the other night she seemed in her usual health and spirits, the latter being somewhat reserved at all times, as you may have learned. I recall nothing which indicated that she had resolved on self-destruction, nor that she was not satisfied with life as she was living it.

"I called a cab after the play and when we had entered she settled back in one corner and passed some criticisms on the acting and the music. In all this she was in her usual mood, and at the door of her residence she responded favorably to a future date for a visit to an opera, which suggestion came from me.

"I saw nothing of her after the closing of her door which shut off her figure, and turning, I went back to the cab which had been waiting for me and was driven at once to my lodgings.

"The number of the cab which we occupied that night was 1003, and the man who handled the whip bears the name of Jack Magee and is to be found at his usual stand in Union Square. He is a short, heavy-set man with side-whiskers after the English fashion, and he will, I have no doubt, confirm my narrative so far as he is concerned in it.

"I never heard Mrs. Totten mention any enemies and I cannot conceive of any, and the thought of self-destruction is also a mystery to me. She grieved a good deal about her husband and lamented the fate which he met. The duel was about a woman who crossed Captain Totten's path, and while he went to the fatal field with prejudices against the so-called "code of honor," he was in the right, as an investigation made by me proved. I never met Captain Totten; but from all information obtained of him outside his widow's story, I came to regard him in the light of a martyr for principle.

"This, I believe, is all I know about the unfortunate and terrible affair which has fallen into the hands of the police. If you care to question me I am at your service at any time and my number is well known to you.

"I might add, in conclusion, that one week ago Mrs. Totten made a change in the conduct of her household affairs and that she dismissed a servant who is a native of Algiers and secured an American maid.

With all respect, and at your service in any way you may see fit to use me, I am,

Truly yours.

KYRLE KIDLACE,
("Late Captain 10th R. A.")

Prince Peter, after the reading of the statement, looked for a moment at Captain Kidlace and then laid one of his soft hands upon the table.

"How do you like it?" asked the captain.

"It sounds well; but—"

"You see something in it against which you would enter a protest?"

"Slightly."

"What is it?"

"Are you obliged to make such a statement as that?"

Kidlace leaned forward and looked Prince Peter in the eye.

"Obliged to? Those are queer words."

"To you they may be, captain, but I think them eminently proper, just at this time at any rate."

"Don't you think I ought to explain my part in the affair of what is destined to be an eventful night in police annals?"

Prince Peter crossed his long legs and said nothing.

"You don't want them to swoop down upon me, arrest me for suspicion and get me into an unpleasant mess, do you?"

"Of course I don't, but I don't think I would be in a hurry to send that statement in. Wait till things reach it in the course of proper developments."

"Proper developments? Fiddlesticks!"

cried Captain Kidlace. "Mind you, I have to do something for my own honor, and I intend to send this statement to the superintendent of police this very morning."

"In the shape it stands now?"

"Why not?"

"Read the last paragraph again."

Captain Kidlace did so.

"Don't you see where that may lead to?" asked Prince Peter. "It entangles the dismissed maid in the net of suspicion and—and—by Jove! captain, I did not think you would do that."

"It does nothing of the kind. It simply puts the police in possession of something which they ought to know in order to get at things now hidden by the veil of death."

"Send it, then. Send it in and make an ass of yourself. That's all I have to say in the matter."

Captain Kidlace looked at his visitor not a little perplexed, and, biting his lips beneath the dark mustache which drooped over his mouth, he said:

"I'll let you write out a statement to your notion. There are pens and ink at your elbow. I'll come back in a little while."

He rose to quit the chamber, but the voice of Prince Peter called him back.

"I never write anything, thank you, captain," he said. "If you are bound to send that thing in to the lion do so, but please excuse me from getting up one. I don't care to."

In another moment Captain Kidlace had come back and with one hand resting on the edge of the table he looked at the man on the other side.

"I don't mean to get the maid into trouble. I never thought of doing so."

"Then, why finish the statement as you have?"

"It was an after-thought and was not intended to harm any one."

"All right, captain. Send in the statement. I guess it will pass muster with the big guns at the head office; but don't growl if this is not the last of your part in the affair."

"You infernal scamp! do you threaten me with words the meaning of which you don't even try to conceal? Don't I know that you have fallen in love with the dismissed maid; that you have housed her now in a certain part of the city, and that you were with her in the same theater watching Mrs. Totten and I on the fatal night?"

Prince Peter's face did not lose a vestige of color. He merely filled his chair with his cigar grasped firmly between thumb and finger, while the face of Captain Kidlace changed color twice in a second.

One of the twain was losing his temper, the other was keeping his in an admirable manner.

"You are determined to shield the Algerine; I can see that, and you seem willing to shield her at the expense of other people's reputations!" continued Captain Kidlace.

"Just as you say, captain," sarcastically answered Prince Peter. "If I were chief of police of New York, knowing what I know about some people's past, I would laugh at certain statements in that document, and instead of filing it, as the truth, would investigate a little—just a little, if you please, Captain Kidlace."

The captain fell back from the table and for a moment glared at the cool-headed man who was watching him with the *sang froid* of a cunning rascal.

"What do you mean?" he roared. "This is my house and we have been companions for years, yet you sit there and throw out insinuations which affect not only my honor, but that of the woman lying dead in her elegant home on N— street."

The smile which came to Prince Peter's face while he listened to these words was devilish, but decidedly cunning.

He laid his cigar on the edge of the table, taking care that it did not burn the cloth, and lifting his eyes to Captain Kidlace's said in measured tones:

"You have lied three times in that statement. In the first place, you did not first meet Denia Totten in Lyons; secondly she was not in her usual mood at the theater; and lastly," and here Prince Peter paused an instant, "you returned to the house after she had bid you good-night!"

These words spoken with all the coolness of a practiced villain came from Prince Peter's lips like words of doom.

Captain Kidlace's face had no color now and as it was pushed forward, the light falling on it revealed a haggard face, white and ghastly.

"Where were you?" he asked. "Yes, what were you doing in that vicinity at that hour?"

"Never mind where I was," was the reply. "Now, are you going to send that statement to the police?"

The paper seemed ready to fall from Captain Kidlace's hand; he drew back as he took a firmer grip on it and the next moment he had it above his head.

"I am going to send it if it seals my doom!" cried the man. "This document goes direct to the superintendent of police, and I will stand by every word in it, so help me Heaven!"

A cold, cynical smile was all the answer he got.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRINCE AND FEZZAM.

For once at least in the life of Prince Peter he seemed beaten by a man as cool-headed as himself.

Captain Kidlace, still gripping the statement which he had drawn up, came forward and took a chair opposite the man across the table.

"You can't frighten me into keeping back what is the truth. I don't care what you say about the document. You mean, miserably minded puppy, if you try to disprove the slightest statement in this paper, I will have you stripped at Police Headquarters, and a photograph taken of your back!"

Prince Peter seemed to recoil as he looked at the man suddenly turned cool and collected.

"I will tell the story of your past. I will tell who your mother is and where she lives. I will expose your connection with the infamous traffic carried on by the wretch Soulless Simon. I will drag from remote corners of your life certain things which will deprive you of the specious title you bear, and, by the hand of fate! I will see that you are dogged not only to a felon's cell, but to the gallows!"

The man who listened seemed to shrink within himself as these words poured from Captain Kidlace's mouth.

When the last one had been spoken he pushed his chair back and stood erect.

He had got second wind and seemed as calm as ever.

"Very well. Good-night, captain," he said as he looked down upon the man still seated.

"Do just what you please. It all lies with you," said Kidlace.

"And the end is in the hand of the Sheriff of New York county. So beware!"

They looked at one another like tigers and without another word Prince Peter went out.

For a minute Captain Kidlace watched the door as if he expected to see it open and readmit his caller, but it remained shut, and he smiled as he seemed to recall the interview.

Then he folded the "statement," put it back in the yellow envelope which had held it and thrust the whole into an inner pocket.

After this he consulted his watch and having given Prince Peter time to get out of the house and perhaps a square away, he went out himself.

Captain Kidlace knew where Police Headquarters was, and not long after quitting the house he entered the well-known building on Mulberry street and asked to be shown to the officer in charge.

As he was shown into the room, where he soon stood face to face with the superintendent, his hand wandered to his pocket and he said:

"I am Captain Kyrle Kidlace, the friend of the late Mrs. Totten, and I have come to lay before you a statement which I deemed necessary on my part."

The envelope and its somewhat startling contents fell before the handsome man in the arm-chair and Captain Kidlace took a vacant seat near by.

In another moment the door opened and a little man came in, but seeing Captain Kid-

lace, was about to withdraw when he was asked to remain by the superintendent.

"I shall be through in a few minutes, Doctor Kirby. This gentleman is Captain Kidlace, and he has brought me a statement concerning his part in the unfortunate affair of the N— street mansion."

Doctor Kirby turned his little red face to the captain and while the officer opened the paper, he said:

"You went home with her from the theater, I believe?"

"I was her escort, sir."

"You left her at the door of her residence and after that did not see her."

There was a slight hesitancy on the captain's part, and with an effort he put out his hand and touched the arm of the superintendent.

"I beg your pardon, but there is a discrepancy in my statement which I will correct now. Certain events have taken place since writing it that I shall tell the whole truth. I did return to the house after I bade Mrs. Totten good-night at the door. I went back for the purpose of asking her a question; but, sir, I did not get further inside than the hall. I went out without seeing her, as I did not hear anything of her and thought she had retired at once to her chamber."

Doctor Kirby turned to the superintendent and asked:

"Has Mr. Zebedee called yet this morning?"

"I have not seen him."

For several minutes no noise was heard in the little private room occupied by the head dignitary of the New York Police, and then that person, looking up from the document which he had just read, caught Captain Kidlace's eye.

"I thank you very much for this document," said he. "It is timely and important since it throws a little light upon the dead woman's past. Doctor Kirby will tell you that she died by poison, and it is to be discovered whose hand administered it."

"By poison," said the little doctor. "I have discovered that beyond dispute and we look to our Mr. Zebedee for the balance."

"He is a detective, I presume?" said Captain Kidlace.

"Yes, sir. We regard him equal to any emergency and we expect to have from him in a short time a report which shall throw all the light we need upon the dark affair. Where do you reside, captain?"

Captain Kidlace gave his number to Doctor Kirby and three minutes later stood on sidewalk before the building.

The sun was in his face and his heart was beating fast.

He had left his famous statement on the superintendent's desk and he recalled Prince Peter's last words as he walked away.

So there was a detective on the trail.

Mr. Zebedee was the shadow's name and he blamed himself for not asking where he might be found.

But it would not be difficult to find him, and with this thought uppermost in his mind he walked a square, struck a car and was whirled away.

Meantime Prince Peter had gone half-way across the city.

There was about the fellow a nervousness which he had tried to check by several stops at saloons but he was nervous still.

His slick appearance seemed to have suffered somewhat and when he walked up the steps of a certain house in an alley-like street he was very much out of repair.

A child came to the door in response to his knock and he pushed past her into an inner room where he stood face to face with old Fezzam.

Little Zulef, the Magic Child, as she was called by her foster-father, drew off and watched Prince Peter who sat unsteadily in his chair as if she knew that the man was not himself.

"Do you know what he's done?" asked Prince Peter, while Fezzam regarded him.

"What who has done? I don't understand you, Prince."

"It's what the captain's done that I came to talk about. He's written a statement which he says he will take to the police. It's all about his last visit to her home and—and— See here, Fezzam, let's get the babe to see for us."

Little Zulef uttered an exclamation of re-

monstrance when she heard herself referred to, and as Fezzam turned toward her she darted behind the thick curtain which swung across one of the dingy corners of the room.

"Call her out and she will tell us more than I can. I want to know if he's really taken it there. Confound the captain! We will have to twist his neck as we twisted the one last night—ha, ha!"

Zulef, listening with all ears, gave vent to a scream which caught Prince Peter's ears, and he rose to bring her out of her retreat, when she came out herself and covered him with her white hand.

"Did you do it, you wicked man? Did you find the gentleman who was here early this morning? They will hang you if you have strangled him!"

"Great Caesar! is that the liberty you give the babe?" cried the man looking at old Fezzam. "What will she be when she gets a little older?"

"Come here," commanded Fezzam, and the child obeyed, but avoided Prince Peter as she advanced.

The Algerine took her transparent hand and smoothed it while he looked into her face, strangely white and very lovely.

She seemed to fall asleep in the old man's arms.

Prince Peter in a half maudlin condition looked at the display of mesmerism and waited for Zulef to talk.

"What do you want to know?" asked Fezzam, looking at the visitor.

"I want to know two things: first has he taken the document to the police, and then if the bird is safe in the cage."

Fezzam stroked Zulef's face and asked:

"What do you see, child?"

To his surprise there was no reply, though the lips tried to move responsive to his will.

"What's the matter with the babe?" cried Prince Peter.

The old man tried again, but with the same result.

"You haven't lost your power over her, have you, Fezzam? She is a gold mine so long as you keep her in the right condition, but when she fails you the jig is up."

Fezzam held the fragile body at arm's length and tried again and again to work his spell on the mind of the child.

She seemed to wilt in his grasp as a flower wilts in the sun, and Prince Peter watched the battle, but half comprehending: it in its true light.

"Let me try," he cried, suddenly taking Zulef from Fezzam's grasp. "I've been here often enough to learn a thing or two. She will talk for me if you will only watch her and keep up the spell, Fezzam."

Little Zulef seemed to repel the touch which had taken her.

Prince Peter laughed and looked from the child face to that of the man before him.

"You can't for she won't," said the old Algerine, taking Zulef from Prince Peter. "Some other time. You must come again. The detective would not let me spell her last night, or rather this morning, for as you know it was morning when he left the house."

The child slid from the skinny arms that held her, and tottering to a ragged sofa across the room, stretched her little figure there and took a long breath of weariness.

"Where is he?" asked old Fezzam.

"In the cage, of course."

"Where was he?"

"On the steps. You told him, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I told you too, eh, Prince?"

"Just in time, too. But this other man—this man who has drawn up a statement to the police. Why, he threatened me."

"Threatened you, eh?"

"That's what he did. Look at the babe's eyes. Does she understand what we are saying?"

"No, she sleeps that way," was the reply.

"It's sunny. Her eyes seem open and she appears to be listening. Yes, he threatened me—told me that if I didn't look out, he would have my back photographed."

A demoniac grin overspread the leathery features of Fezzam, and for a moment he gave way to the hilarity occasioned by Prince Peter's remarks.

"And you told him what?"

"I pointed out three falsehoods in the

statement. I told him that he knew more than he had told in the document, and that he would do well to look out."

"That was right and he threatened to have your back photographed! Why, he can't do that without your consent, Prince. He may be photographed one of these days without his head. If the detective is safe, if you have made no mistake, there can be no failure, and the shadows of New York need never get at what Fuzilie knows. Rosa, the maid now in the dead lady's mansion, will let you in at any time, eh?"

"At any time," answered Prince Peter. "What made you ask, Fezzam?"

"I want you to go there as soon as possible. There is something in that house which the Black Cord wants. You must go to it at once."

"After what?"

"There is somewhere in the house, the maid knows or can give you a clue to it—something which you must get. It is a blue vial in a little silver box not larger than your hand. I want it, Prince. Not until it is in my hands is the Black Cord safe."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GAME PRINCE PETER PLAYED.

THERE was something about the commission which Prince Peter did not seem to like.

Old Fezzam, who appeared to be a master spirit in the organization called in these pages the Black Cord, did not see fit to recall the command, and consequently Prince Peter walked from the den in the alley with the orders he had received.

The body of Denia Totten, mutilated by the doctors as is common in such cases, lay in a darkened room in the N— street house awaiting burial, and Prince Peter after reviving and stimulating anew turned his face in that direction.

He did not reach the house until the sun had nearly gained the meridian, and Rosa, who answered his ring, opened the door and gazed curiously into his face.

Prince Peter walked into the parlor at the maid's heels and turned suddenly upon her there.

Rosa knew the man and while she looked at him she evidently wished that he had not entered the house.

"I'm here on a bit of business, Rosa," said Prince Peter. "I don't care to stay long. I want to find something to which you can direct me, and you will get rid of my presence just as soon as that article is found."

The girl neither spoke nor moved; she only stared at Prince Peter and waited.

"I want a little silver box which is in the house, probably in her private room."

"I never saw it, sir."

"That may be, as you are not supposed to see everything, Rosa, but you will show me where the chamber is, and I will do the rest."

Rosa led the way to the hall and mounted the staircase without much ado.

She conducted Prince Peter to a door on the second floor, but as she reached it she turned to him with a look of quiet remonstrance.

"This room is not to be opened to every one," she said. "I don't know why, but the police have given such directions."

"Very well. You will open it to me, and I won't tell them," grinned the man.

Rosa opened the door and Prince Peter stepped across the threshold.

Rosa followed him, shutting the door softly after her, and then watched him as he searched the place.

"Have they been here before me, Rosa?"

"The police?"

"Yes, anybody."

"They have given the whole house an overturning. Sergeant Mittens has been in this very room."

"Did he find anything?"

"I couldn't say."

Prince Peter went on with his search, but stopped suddenly as he pulled a trunk from a corner.

"Can you open this for me, Rosa?"

"I can't, sir. I haven't the keys."

"Who has them?"

"The police."

"Oh!" ejaculated the man. "Do you know what she kept in this trunk?—What she concealed, I mean?"

"I don't."

Prince Peter toiled at the trunk a moment and then gave up. It was shut against all his efforts, and he was obliged to stop.

The chamber did not reward him, and as he turned to go he found the hand of Rosa laid upon his arm.

"Did the captain send you hither?" she asked.

The look which accompanied the words caused Prince Peter to say "yes," and the girl's brow cleared as if by magic.

"I thought he did, else you would not have come. Tell him that they are watching the house like hawks, and that we are still in the woods, and will be for some time."

"I'll tell him, Rosa. He's a trump, the captain is."

The girl blushed.

"Did she give you much trouble, Rosa?"

In an instant the maid turned pale and staggered against the wall, from which she stared at Prince Peter, who was playing a suddenly assumed role which he intended to play for all there was in it.

"Don't get white. It's all in the family, Rosa," he went on, and the girl, reassured, recovered somewhat, and they went down stairs together.

"Where is she?" asked Prince Peter at the foot of the staircase.

Rosa pointed toward a door which was shut, and shivered.

"I'm sorry the captain can't find the box. You see he sent me after it and it was so important."

"Must he have it?"

"He says so. Didn't like to come himself you see, girl. It wouldn't look quite right, and you know that I am his friend for you saw us together in the Park last week one day."

The cunning rascal saw that the maid was laboring under some pent-up feeling which was slowly mastering her and so he quietly waited.

"Let me take another look," said she. "Wait here for me. I will find it for him if it is in the house."

She darted off up-stairs and Prince Peter, left alone in the hall, waited for her return.

The old hallway was full of shadows, for the sunlight did not brighten it, and he smiled to himself when he thought how he was duping the girl.

"You couldn't fool Fuzilie this way," he chuckled. "But the captain's name seems a good one to conjure by in this house, and if my last play don't fetch the box which old Fezzam wants, why, there is no need of coming back on another hunt."

Rosa was gone ten minutes when she came down as white as a cloth with something clutched in one of her bloodless hands.

As Prince Peter saw that something shining he waited with a smile lurking at his mouth and Rosa came up breathing hard.

"Tell him that I found it for him," she said as she placed the silver box in his hands.

"Say that I would have hunted it up for no other man on earth. You will tell him, won't you?"

"Of course I will," was the reply, and thrusting the box into his deep pocket, Prince Peter, successful at last, was let out of the mansion and vanished.

"You can do anything when once you know how," he laughed as he bolted down the street. "I won't go direct to old Fezzam's for I've got it anyhow. I guess I'll drop in and see how Fuzilie comes on."

So, instead of crossing the city to where Fezzam held forth, he turned in another direction and pulled up in front of a house, the door of which he opened with a key taken from his pocket.

He locked the door when inside and made his way to a room alongside the hall.

"Don't seem to be any one at home," he remarked. "I'll tap the bell and see."

Thereupon he sounded the little bell which rested on the green baize of the center-table and waited on.

At last footsteps came down the staircase in the hall and the door opened.

Something like a scream rewarded Prince Peter's vigil and a beautiful girl with an olive skin tottered forward.

She dropped on the floor at his feet and gave vent to a groan which the man knew she must have wrung from the depths of her soul.

"What's the matter? What has happened, girl?" cried the man.

Fuzilie tore open her garment and revealed the soft skin of her bosom.

"If you have a dagger, drive it to Fuzilie's heart!" she cried. "The cage is empty!"

Prince Peter sprung up and pushed back the girl as she rose to intercept his flight from the room.

"Empty, you say, traitress?" he cried. "I will drive more than one dagger through you if you have opened the door and let the hawk out. Tell me the truth! What made you do it?"

The tall, willow-like form of the Algerine towered before him, quivering with love and fury, but she did not speak.

"You let him buy you off, did you?" and the hand of Prince Peter seized her wrist and pulled her toward him. "You looked at his money and sold me out, did you? Do you know what the penalty is, viperess?"

"Fuzilie sold no one. He broke the bars of the cage. Come, I will show you."

"Oh, you have fixed it up to suit yourself, but I will let you show me the trail."

Prince Peter followed the girl from the room and she led him into another where she touched a well-concealed button in the wall which opened a door and revealed a flight of steps.

They went down these, the girl leading the way, and at the bottom, where there was a cold, damp smell, Prince Peter paused while the girl lit a jet which protruded from the stone wall.

"You can see," she said, pointing across the place. "You see where those stones are removed and where the hole is."

With a half-suppressed oath, Prince Peter ran across the dungeon and stooped in one corner.

He found a hole which seemed to lead into the earth beyond the wall, and Fuzilie, who had reached his side, was watching him as he made a hasty examination.

"Why didn't you send for me once?" he asked, rising and confronting her with blazing eyes.

"You never told me where I could find you."

"That is true. I never dreamed of the hawk's escape from a place like this."

He looked again and then fell back with a glance at the girl in his way.

"When did you discover this escape?" he asked.

"Two hours ago."

Prince Peter stooped again and looked at the earth which clung to the removed stones.

"He's been gone a good deal longer than that. It's unfortunate. I can't blame you, girl."

The Algerine threw her arms around Prince Peter's neck, but he shook them off and turned toward the steps.

In the lighted room overhead he turned suddenly upon Fuzilie and said:

"I am not the Black Cord. I may not be able to exonerate you from all knowledge of this escape. You must go, girl."

"What! leave you? No, no, Prince Peter! I love you, and Fuzilie will not quit this city without you."

"Come, it won't be for long. I will join you in a short time. You must go for my sake."

"Ah, that is another thing. For your sake I will go."

Ten minutes later the man was on the sidewalk and his gait was almost a run.

He did not stop until he had reached Fezzam's house, and bursting past little Zulef, who, paler than ever, opened the door for him, he sprung into the old Algerine's room and dived one hand into an inner pocket.

"Aha, you have it?" cried Fezzam, his face lighting up with joy. "I thought you would not fail."

"I had to lie, but that's nothing. I told her that the captain wanted it, and—Heavens! what have I done with the box?"

He felt again, his face growing paler than ever as his hand felt every corner of the pocket, and when he drew it out empty he

staggered to a chair and sunk into it in a heap.

"Where is it?" cried Fezzam.

"I had it. By the beard of the Prophet! I got it all right, but I have lost it."

"Devil! you have sold it to the police. You have turned traitor and sold them the box which renders the Black Cord safe."

Prince Peter seemed to have lost his tongue, for to these accusations he made no reply, and Fezzam, darting across the room, came back with something that writhed and hissed at the end of his hand, and as he thrust it into Prince Peter's face, he saw the great eyes of a snake and the forked tongue almost touching his cheek.

He uttered a shriek, twisted from the chair and bounded to the nearest door, where he turned as he tugged at the knob to see the same infernal avenger leaping toward him from Fezzam's grasp.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PICKED-UP LINK.

It was true that Zach Zebedee, the detective, had escaped from the "cage" beneath Fuzilie's house, after his capture by the noose the time he reached the steps for the purpose of worming some secrets from Mrs. Totten's Algerine maid.

A friendly sewer which he found not far from the removed wall of the retreat accelerated his flight, and he made his appearance to Hornets in the Broadway nest much to that person's astonishment.

Hornets had a story to tell and this was his encounter with Prince Peter at Mother Doss's house, and he related it after his peculiar manner, interlarded with certain words which he had picked up at the theaters.

Night had come again when the little figure of Doctor Kirby came up the stairs leading to the detective's den, and to his surprise he found Zach within.

"Been haunting this place about twice an hour," said the doctor as he looked at Hornets who stood ready to confirm his story. "I've got something."

As he stopped he took from his pocket something which he had wrapped up in a piece of newspaper and placed it on the table.

"That's the agent," said he.

The Broadway detective tore the paper off and revealed a little silver box at sight of which Hornets gave one of his exclamations and almost upset the table as he tried to climb upon it for a nearer view.

"There's a funny story about that box," said the doctor. "It was found on the street about three hours ago by a boy who was run over by a cart while he had the thing in his pocket."

"Did the cart know he had it?" said Hornets with a twinkle in his eye.

The police surgeon did not mind the remark, but proceeded:

"The little Arab was taken to the Emergency Hospital with a compound fracture, and Doctor Gump, the head man there, and my friend—we graduated together, you remember, Zach—got hold of the box and sent for me. When I went thither and saw what the find amounted to, I knew what I had, for it almost tells its own story. See here," and Doctor Kirby touched a spring and removed a false bottom on which he found a paper cover with writing.

"This is Arabic you see, Zach. I knew it the moment I saw it for we had an Arab student with us and he used to show us some of his peculiar writing. I took the box to Professor Craik, who translated the writing on the Obelisk in the Park, and he told me what it was—simply a prescription for the deadliest poison in the world. But that is not all. Look here!"

Doctor Kirby held the box in such a position that the ferret could see some letters on the bottom, and he made out "D. K., Tunis, 1881."

"How does that strike you?" triumphantly cried the doctor.

"It is getting plainer," said the shadow. "That box must have belonged to Denia Totten whose maiden name was 'King,' and who lived in Tunis that year."

"Of course; but the box was picked up on the street by the boy with the compound fracture."

"It puzzles you I see, doctor?"

"Of course, for who lost the box?"

Zach Zebedee said nothing, but the voice of Hornets rung out as it sounded a name at which the shadow started.

"Why not Prince Peter?" cried the boy.

"He's liable to have some unlikely thing about him and he may have had the box. Who knows?"

"Where was it found?"

"The patient at the hospital says he picked it up in the gutter."

"But what street?"

"He didn't seem to know."

"Where does the youngster live?"

"Somewhere near Cherry, if not on that street."

Zach Zebedee reflected a moment.

"I'll see him."

"The boy?"

"Yes."

"I'll give you a letter to Doctor Gump at the Emergency."

Kirby hastily scrawled some words on a page of his memorandum and the ferret was off.

He found Doctor Gump, who, after reading what Kirby had written, led the way to the boy's cot.

The little fellow with feverish face and clear bright eyes was wide-awake and the detective bent over him.

"Where's your home, my little fellow?" he asked.

There was something in Zach Zebedee's voice which seemed to win the boy from the first.

"We haven't been able to get that out of him yet," whispered Doctor Gump. "I don't think you'll make anything in the same direction."

But the boy put out his hand and said imploringly:

"I like you, sir. I live on Cherry, No. —. I hadn't no business before that cart, and, then, the man didn't seem to care who he ran over."

"But the box? Did you pick it up on Cherry street?"

"Yes, sir, near the old Blazer house, if you know where that is."

Well did Zach Zebedee know, for he had just made his escape from it.

That was enough, and the detective took his leave.

He had not been gone long, but he found Hornets alone.

"The pill freak said he'd drop in later," said the boy. "I guess something connected with that box took him off. He seemed to want to know what was in the vial which he said was in it when found. Ho! here he is with a cat!"

Doctor Kirby entered at this moment with a cat which he must have picked up at the mouth of some alley, and carrying it to the table he set it down and bade Hornets hold it.

In another moment the police surgeon had taken out the bluish vial and was holding the unstoppered mouth over the cat's eyes.

Both Zach and Hornets watched the experiment with a good deal of interest, and as a drop of the almost colorless liquid fell into the upturned optic, the animal twisted back and almost freed herself from the boy's grasp.

"It does the work!" cried Hornets. "The cat is dead!"

It was true, and when the boy released the animal it fell upon the table without a quiver, for life had fled.

"That's why they never found anything in her stomach," said Kirby as he looked up.

"It's the deadliest poison in the world—it is the secret death-agent of the Algerines. One drop in a human eye is enough and it leaves no mark."

"Would a cat-drop kill an elephant?" asked Hornet.

"Bring in your elephant and we will see," answered Kirby with mock gravity as the boy grinned:

"Give me the money, doctor, and I'll buy the biggest one in the market."

The dead feline was proof enough of the killing powers of the mysterious drug, and Zach Zebedee turned again to the little vial.

"The boy found it on Cherry near the old Blazer house. Some one who knows the old place must have dropped it in the gutter."

"Prince Peter," again suggested Hornets. "I can't help going back to that slick rascal who wanted to drop me gently from one of Mother Doss's windows just to see me land in the alley."

"Zach, we must get at this. Now, tell me what you have discovered, if anything?"

They took chairs with the deadly vial reposing in the depths of the silver box, and the detective related his adventures since seeing Fezzam.

Doctor Kirby listened with interest, and Hornets, who had heard the story, seemed to take the same pride in hearing it over.

"To-morrow I begin on the right trail," said the detective, in conclusion. "I know who was in the Blazer house when I was thrust into it after being caught by the cord. I have found the hiding-place of the dismissed maid; I know who concealed her in that house; I know that Fezzam intercepted me on the steps with the Black Cord, and I am sure that the person suspected of killing Denia Totten never lifted a hand against her himself."

"You mean Captain Kidlace who wrote out his statement and carried it in person to the chief?"

"Did he do that?"

"He did, and I twisted out of him a confession which he did not include in the statement."

"What was that, doctor?"

"He went back into the house after bidding Mrs. Totten good-night at the door—went back when she was fairly in the house; but he says he did not see her that time."

"She may have been dead in the parlor even then."

"Of course I can't say."

"Time and human lips will answer that question."

"They will if you live, Zach," cried Kirby.

"But there's one thing I would like to know, and that is what demanded the taking of Denia Totten's life."

"She was in Prince Peter's road some-way!" cried Hornets, striking the table with his fist.

"You don't like that gentleman, I see," said Kirby, looking over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Would you fall in love with a man what wanted to drop you out o' a four-story window when there was no feather beds on the ground underneath? I rather reckon you wouldn't."

"Shall I leave this with you, Zach?" asked the doctor, picking up the box and its contents.

"Not at present. Take it with you, for, now that I am out of the trap, and have the Black Cord to fight, I don't want to be hampered with that thing, which needs good watching."

As Doctor Kirby hid the box in his pocket, Hornets said with a wink:

"Don't forget the cat, doctor. You are entirely welcome to the patient you have skillfully put out of the way."

Kirby turned away after bidding the detective good-night, and promising to call the next day to see what links he had picked up, and left the room.

Midway down the stairs, which were illy lighted, Doctor Kirby stopped.

Something darker than the wall was seen near the foot of the flight, and after watching a moment, he went back and opened the detective's door.

In a word he told his story.

"It's Prince Peter!" cried Hornets, as he sprang from his chair and started for the hall, but was brushed back by the doctor's stubby arm.

Zach, the detective, went into the hallway and leaned over the staircase; but his eyes detected nothing, and he told the little doctor who was at his heels.

The way was clear to the sidewalk, and as Doctor Kirby reflected he drew forth the silver box.

"Till to-morrow," he said, as he handed it to the ferret. "I will get it then, but I wouldn't go home with it in my bosom now for all New York."

Zach Zebedee kept the prize and saw his visitor depart.

The little doctor reached the sidewalk and looked in both directions.

A car had just passed, crossing Broadway,

and he saw he would have to wait for the next one.

He walked along thinking of the shadow on the steps, and had reached the opening of an alley, when he was seized by a hand that had a grip of steel, and before he could resist he was dragged into the darkness and held up along a stone wall.

One hand covered his mouth. It was soft and silken, and the other went through his clothes with the swiftness of lightning.

He knew what the villain was looking for. "Curse you!" grated the robber, whose hat was pulled down over his brow. "You're not worth killing, but I guess we'll take care that you don't give it away."

A pair of hands seemed to sink into the little doctor's throat, and when they loosened their clutch, he pitched forward and fell across the alley like a person strangled by demon power.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SLEEVE-BUTTON CLEW.

Mrs. DENIA TOTTEN was in the grave which holds so many secrets, and some of the papers had already ceased to discuss the startling death.

A small array of carriages had followed the woman to her last resting place, but near the grave stood a man who watched the proceedings with a good deal of interest.

This person was Zach Zebedee, the ferret, and not far, from him, with eyes as keen as the shadows, a boy leaned against a monument and surveyed the same scene.

"Well?" said the detective as they met outside the cemetery. "What did you see, Hornets?"

The boy looked up into Zach's face and smiled.

"About as much as you did, Captain Zach," was the reply, "I went there with my peepers open and I saw Prince Peter."

"Always Prince Peter, eh?" smiled the detective. "Where did you see him?"

"He got out of one of the carriages. Didn't you see him, Zach—the tall fellow, well dressed and wearing gloves of a pale color? That was the Prince."

The detective recalled the man and thought a moment.

"What made him come to the cemetery?" he asked the boy.

"Had business here, I guess. Oh, he's a cute one and I would watch him."

They went back to the city and separated.

For some time the ferret waited for the coming of little Doctor Kirby, or at least a note from him, but as the hours waned and he did not come, he concluded that some professional business kept him away.

He was on the eve of quitting the room when a girl not very well dressed came to the door which stood half-way open and looked timidly in.

"Is this Mr. Zebedee's room?" she inquired.

"This is the place and I am Zach Zebedee," said the ferret, and she entered, reassured.

"I was told to make no mistake," said she. "I was to be sure of the place before I delivered my message."

Zach held out his hand and a note, folded and sealed with wax, was placed therein.

He opened it immediately and read:

"They found me last night before I could take a car. I had hands of burning iron at my throat and they say that I have been lying unconscious save with lucid intervals ever since I was picked up in the alley where 'the hands' found me. The bearer of this is a friend and she will guide you to where I am. Come at once if she finds you in and don't let anything but the most pressing business keep you back. Trust the girl, I say. She's all right.

KIRBY."

The detective looked up and encountered the girl's eyes as she hastened to say:

"Jack found the little gentleman in the alley knowing nothing at all, and the first thing we knowed he came in with him in his arms. We did all we could for him and at last got him out of the death-like condition. There were marks on his throat somewhat like the marks of fingers. I never saw anything like it. When he came out of the trance he called for 'Mr. Zebedee,' but of

course we didn't know who he meant until he was recovered enough to write the letter I brought you. If you care to let me guide you I will show you where he is."

Zach was ready and he set out with the girl who was quite good looking, but pale for want of fresh air.

He was surprised to discover that she turned into one of the nearest alleys, and after a short walk down it she opened a door and looked back at him with a smile.

The house which they entered was neat though not well furnished, and in one of the rooms the detective found the little doctor seated in an arm-chair, white and unnerved.

A bottle stood on the table at his elbow and the moment he saw Zach he began to laugh.

"It was a good thing I left the box in your care, Zach," said he. "The hands went through me like a dose of salts, but as they failed to find the box their owner concluded to let me lie a dead man in the alley according to the axiom that dead men tell no tales. If it hadn't been for this family I guess it would have come true in my case; but I seem to be worth a dozen dead men yet."

The occupants of the house, retiring, left the detective and the doctor alone and they talked on.

"What was he like, doctor?"

"I hardly know for he came at me so sudden that it took me some time to collect myself, and then I was backed up against a wall with those infernal hands at my windpipe. I felt them burning their way into my throat—"

"Are you sure they were fingers all the time?"

"Since I have thought 'over it carefully I am not prepared to say. The pressure seemed all around my neck and you know it takes long fingers to encircle a neck like mine. I sometimes think that a rope was used—a cord, perhaps, for it sunk into my throat burning its way deeper and deeper till I felt myself falling forward, as if the cord had been cut or I had been released."

As the room was dark Zach held back the curtains and looked at the doctor's throat.

There were marks there, not very plain, but they were still to be seen—marks like those which a cord or very long fingers would have made, and when he had dropped the curtain he turned again to Kirby.

"Did you get a glimpse of your assailant?" he asked.

"The alley was dark for some one must have extinguished the light at its mouth for a purpose, but I saw that the man was tall and wiry and that his hat was well pulled over his brow. There was no mask, only the hat, you see."

"And he left you nothing for a clew?"

"He was too sharp for that."

"Where is the person who found you and brought you to this place?"

"He goes to work at daylight, consequently he is not in yet, but the girl who is very bright knows everything. Call her."

Zach did so and the girl who had carried the doctor's letter to his den came in.

"Margie, this gentleman wants to know if Jack found anything in the alley when he went back to look, after having brought me here," said Kirby.

"Nothing but a button, sir."

"A button?" exclaimed Kirby as he looked down his coat. "They're all here so far as I can see."

"We know that, sir, but Jack found a button where he picked you up; but I guess he took it off with him."

"There, that's something, perhaps," remarked Kirby, looking at the detective.

"You've had button clues before, eh, Zach?"

The girl retired, but the next moment came back with something in her hand.

"Jack left it in his room for all," said she, and she placed in the ferret's hand a button at which both men looked with much curiosity.

"It's not mine," said the doctor positively.

Zach Zebedee carried the button to the light and examined carefully for some moments.

It was a plain pearl sleeve-button such as men not overdressed affect, but he knew that ten thousand of the same pattern might be worn in Gotham.

They discussed the find a few minutes, and Zach told the doctor that he would report his mishap at Headquarters.

"No, let me rest here till I have fully recovered. These people are kind folks and," lowering his voice, "there's something worth studying about the young lady. She recalls my Grace who died when she was about her age."

Smiling at the little doctor's conceit, Zach went away and re-entered his room where he found Hornets who had just come in.

"Well, they caught the doctor last night," said the detective.

"They did, eh?" cried the boy. "Where is he?"

"In the second alley from here."

"Been there ever since?"

"Yes."

"I thought Prince Peter looked rejoiced to-day as if he had scored a victory."

"Look here, Hornets. This button was found where the young man of the house picked up the doctor last night," and the sleeve-button fell jingling on the table in front of the keen-witted boy.

"Great Caesar!" cried Hornets as he caught up the button and held it before his eye. "I wonder if Prince Peter has missed it?"

The Broadway ferret smiled and for a moment gazed at his *protege* as he turned the button over and over in his hand, eying it from every point and now and then nodding approvingly.

"I saw it on his cuff the time he wanted to drop me from Mother Doss's winder," said Hornets. "There's no mistake, Zach."

"But it's a common button, boy. There may be ten thousand of them worn in New York."

"Twenty thousand maybe," was the quick retort, "but this one belongs to the Prince. How do I know? Look here. Don't you see that the gold rim which incases the pearl piece is bent a little and that the button seems ready to drop out? Well, it was that way the night I met him at Mother Doss's and I intended to tell him that he would soon be minus a button, but just then he got in the nice little threat and I kept still. That's how I know that this button was lost by the Prince."

The detective was not astonished at the information given by the boy.

He already knew that Prince Peter was in some way mixed up in the mystery of Denia Totten's death, and if Hornets had told him that he had seen Prince Peter come out of the alley he would not have disputed his word.

"Now," said Hornets, "if you will let me go to Mother Doss's I may find out something about her boy."

"Her boy, Hornets?"

"Yes. It's all been plain to me for some time. Prince Peter is no more a prince than Barnum's educated zebra; but he is Mother Doss's son. He puts on style enough for a royal household, but his ways are as crooked as the path of a snake and he never lets on that he has such a woman for his mother. I have what you call in polite society the *entree* to Mother Doss's house, and we are on the best of terms, though I don't like Prince Peter. I might be able to find out where he was last night, or when he came in, if he came in at all, for he sleeps at home, though he fools the public who believe that he must inhabit a palace like Captain Kidlace."

The detective gave his consent, admonishing the boy sharp that his visit required a good deal of caution and with a whistle Hornets vanished.

Zach followed the boy out and went back to Doctor Kirby, but an hour later as he re-entered his den he was seized by Hornets who had been waiting for him with feverish impatience and was told that Prince Peter was about to quit the city.

"Mother Doss was as mute as a clam," said the boy. "For some time I couldn't get a wedge into her mouth, but at last she said a few words about Prince Peter and I pretended that I had something for him alone—something so important that I dared not communicate it to no one but the Prince himself."

"You're a trump, Hornets."

"And a full hand, eh, Zach?" grinned the boy. "By this time the Prince is on his

way to the ferry and when he gets across the river he will catch the Philadelphia train and go off for a spell."

"Did you worm this out of Mother Doss?"

"Didn't I? The moment I told her that Prince Peter was in danger and that I had been sent by a friend to tell him just what to do, she up and told me that he had gone and that she was to send him word to Philadelphia."

Zach grabbed his hat and for a moment stood at the door watching the delight which danced in the boy's eyes.

"He's sharp, Zach. He has the keenest eyes I ever saw and if he recognizes you—"

"We'll take care of that, Hornets," broke in the detective, tapping his waistcoat pocket. "We're fixed for eyes like Prince Peter's. Good-night."

"I'd like to go along, for something tells me that something's going to happen," mused Hornets, as he went to the window and looked down to catch a glimpse of the ferret's figure on the pave below.

"I'll let him go, for if there is any man on earth entirely able to take care of himself, it's Captain Zach."

CHAPTER IX.

TORN APART.

RESOLVED to bring the flight of Prince Peter to an abrupt termination, Broadway Zach hastened to the ferry and caught a boat in the act of putting off for the Jersey shore.

He did not doubt that the man he wanted was at least one boat ahead of him, but the ferret knew when the next train left for the Quaker City and was not impatient.

As he walked into the depot with his eyes on the alert for Prince Peter, Zach knew that he had come over in time to catch the train, unless the shrewd fellow had taken another road.

Taking a seat in the smoking room which was well filled he pulled his cigar-case from his pocket and selected a smoke.

At the same time his eye wandered over the crowd assembled, but saw no one who resembled the man he sought.

If Prince Peter had come over and was in the room he was well disguised, so well, indeed, that the detective did not penetrate his mask.

There was a moderate rush for the gates when the train caller announced that the Philadelphia Express was about to leave and the detective was in the crowd.

Just ahead of him was a tall man, well dressed, with a dark mustache, and a little grip which he carried in a hand incased in pale gloves.

Prince Peter!

This thought flashed across Zach Zebedee's mind and he followed the man to the parlor-car.

In another moment they had entered and Zach saw his man seat himself at a window as he deposited his grip in the rack overhead.

There was something decidedly cool in the actions of Prince Peter, for as the shadow of New York settled back to watch him he calmly crossed his legs and waited for the train to pull out.

Night had fallen and the lamps showed their light upon hunted and hunter, and the long train left the depot and in short time was running across the fields of Jersey.

Prince Peter, leaning back in the luxurious chair, seemed to become lost in reverie, and Zach who had taken a seat near, fell to watching him when he could do so without exciting suspicion.

The chair beside Prince Peter was unoccupied and after passing through the car of the conductor, Zach moved forward and dropped into this seat.

Prince Peter was not aware of the detective's presence, until he turned and beheld him at his elbow.

There was a light start on the fellow's part and his face flushed for an instant.

"What do you want here?" said the eyes of Mother Doss's son as they threw their baleful light upon the man from Broadway.

"It's going to be a bad night, after all," remarked Zach. "We shall have rain before we get to Philadelphia."

"Perhaps."

Prince Peter was not inclined to be communicative, but Zach, as the train seemed to gain new speed, dropped one hand into his coat pocket and felt something cold there.

"I want you, sir," he said as he suddenly leaned toward Prince Peter, at the same time taking from the pocket something that had a strange glitter. "You can bring the attention of all the passengers down upon you by a little resistance and I am prepared for that."

As the car gave a lurch Prince Peter was jostled toward the aisle; but the hand of Zach Zebedee fell upon his wrist.

Almost at the same moment there was heard a slight click and the slick fellow saw that a steel bracelet circled his wrist and its companion was fastened above the ferret's hand.

It was one of the coolest catches of Captain Zach's career and for a moment Prince Peter seemed inclined to resist, but he ended by bursting into a laugh.

"You're almighty cool," said he. "This is about the coolest bit of business I ever heard of. Who are you and what does this mean?"

They were looking at one another and the train, rushing along, seemed lifted from the rails at times as rain struck the windows, drenching all in an instant.

"They call me Zebedee," said Zach, "and you are wanted for several things—first of all for an assault last night on the person of Doctor Kirby of the Police Department."

"Do I look like I would assault a man, and a little fellow like the doctor, for I have seen him?"

"We will see when you are arraigned. Prince Peter, you were going to Philadelphia, but we will get off at New Brunswick and take the first train back."

"Just as you wish," said the Prince with one of his cool smiles. "I seem to have nothing to do with this business just now. It is all in your hands and, from the way I am fixed, I guess I'll go back with you."

Zach could not help admiring the cleverness of the bird he had netted.

He watched him closely and spoke now and then, receiving short replies, while he knew that the sharp black eyes of Prince Peter were riveted all the time upon him.

"Did you intend to remain away anytime?" he asked.

"That's a queer query. If I had assaulted the little doctor do you think I would come back very soon?"

"That depends. You evidently discovered that you were minus a sleeve button—"

"They're both here, I guess," and Prince Peter held up his hands and let the detective catch a glimpse of pearl sleeve buttons just like the one which at that very moment reposed in one of his pockets.

Zach was about to reply to the button question when there came a dull roar and then a crash that threw them from their chairs, while the train seemed to come to a dead stand, quivering in every iron nerve.

Passengers were thrown in every direction and the air was filled with shrieks, curses and groans as the lights were hurled from their sockets.

It was a collision, and so terrible was it that the windows were shattered and the chairs torn from their fastenings, throwing their occupants in heaps, or burying them beneath a jumble of furniture.

As for Zach Zebedee, he found himself torn loose from his prisoner, and as he sprung up with the manacle dangling from his wrist he caught sight of Prince Peter on the floor beneath the remaining lamp; and, what was more horrible still, the Prince was holding up the stump of an arm, while near him lay a human hand which had been torn off by the shock, as if the steel manacle had acted the part of a surgeon's knife!

The next moment the cry of fire was raised and with the rain beating against the car and into the coaches through the broken windows, men and women struggled to escape from the new peril, while the air again resounded with cries not to be described.

There was a grim smile on Prince Peter's face despite the terrible situation, and the moment Zach sprung to his aid he rose to his knees and begged to be carried from the wreck.

Broadway Zach picked up his prisoner and started toward the door which had been forced open by the collision and which was swinging on broken hinges, while the wind rushed in to fan the flames at the rear end of the car.

One of the detective's hands gripped the sport's wrist in an attempt, hurriedly conceived, to staunch the flow of blood, and as he staggered from the platform with the man in his arms, he caught a glimpse of the woeful wreck and the horrible scene in the light of the fire eating up the coaches.

The collision had occurred at a small town and the ferret saw the lights of a little depot not far off.

Gripping Prince Peter he ran with him to the place and placed him in the hands of those who were attending to the wounded, and then turned back.

There were others to be saved and Zach Zebedee was as courageous as a lion.

It was one of the worst wrecks on the road and as those who had escaped with life, though not without wounds, labored to save the less fortunate, there were acts of heroism which will never be recorded.

At the beginning of his work Zach had unlocked the manacles and replaced them, red with Prince Peter's blood, in his pocket.

He did not give them a thought until he stood with nothing to do, for all who could be reached had been succored and the wreck was doing the rest as it burned.

All at once Zach thought of his prisoner and he went to the depot to see how he came on.

As he entered the little room where the wounded lay on blankets thrown on the floor, his eye wandered up and down the apartment for the one man in whom he was interested.

But he saw him not.

"My friend—the one I carried in with the severed hand?" said he, stopping the man to whose care he had delivered Prince Peter.

"Over there in the corner, sir. He's the fellow who shot himself since the collision."

"Shot himself?" cried the ferret, aghast.

"Yes, sir. He tore the bandages from his wrist and then deliberately mutilated his face beyond all recognition with a pistol."

"The end of Prince Peter!" thought Zach as he went over to the dark corner where something lay with a blanket over it.

He raised the covering and looked down into a mutilated face, and then caught sight of a handless wrist.

It seemed to settle all.

The detective dropped the blanket and turned back; he met the surgeon a moment and told him that the suicide had probably cheated the gallows, and then went out and stood for a minute with the cold rain beating against his face.

While there he thought of Hornets waiting for his report in the den, of Doctor Kirby at the home in the alley, and of Captain Kid-lace and the statement he had carried to the chief of police.

He could do nothing but go back and report.

Prince Peter was dead: the wayward son of Mother Doss was out of the way, and he would give the police no more trouble, and there would be no one to mourn him but Mother Doss herself.

By this time a train which had been brought to the scene of the wreck was ready to pass on on an extemporized switch, and the detective drenched to the skin boarded it and was soon going back to New York.

As he settled back in the seat the events of the night passed before him like the parts of some terrible dream.

He looked at the circular cut on his own wrist made by the strain which had torn off the sport's hand, and smiled grimly when he thought that it might have been his hand instead of Prince Peter's.

He reached the ferry and boarded the boat.

The train carrying a good many of the unfortunate victims of the wreck had made good time, and he saw them borne past him as he stationed himself in the little cabin.

Hornets sprung from his cot behind the curtain the moment the detective's key grat-

ed in the lock and as Zach crossed the room the boy cried out:

"Where's Prince Peter, Captain Zach?"

Broadway Zach told the story of the espionage, the collision and the suicide, and Hornets, with his elbows resting on the table and his chin buried in his hands, heard every word without once interrupting his friend.

"That last act ain't much like Prince Peter," said the keen boy. "I don't doubt your word that some poor devil lost his life in the little station, Zach, but it ain't like Prince Peter to kill himself. He's more likely to kill some one else."

"I lifted the blanket and looked for a moment at the face through which the bullet had plowed, then left Prince Peter where he lay."

"And the hand in the wreck? Did you go back and look for it?"

"I searched the car as best I could; but the fire had licked up every trail and I had to give it up."

Hornets was silent for a moment.

"What became of the hand of the man whose face was shot away?" he asked at last.

"Can't you understand, Hornets? The hand was torn off when the collision threw us apart in the car."

"There, don't get your temper up, Captain Zach. I don't like to buck against your belief, but I'll bet my millions that we've not seen the last of the Prince," and the hand of Hornets emphasized his declaration by falling with a good deal of power upon the table.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE BLAZER HOUSE.

As Broadway Zach did not return to the city until the wee sma' hours of the night, owing to the terrible collision, he did not deem it necessary to acquaint Doctor Kirby or the Department with his adventures on the rail.

He therefore retired after telling his story to Hornets, and the next day sauntered forth to carry out certain designs.

He had resolved to run down Fuzilie, the Algerine maid, dismissed by Mrs. Totten shortly before the tragedy of N— street and at whose door he (Zach) had been caught by the Black Cord.

His first visit was to the little police surgeon, who heard him with an almost incredulous smile on his face and who commented on Hornets's conclusions with another laugh.

"The boy doesn't seem to hear of anything but Prince Peter," said the doctor. "I am as sure that he is dead as I am of my own continued existence. It is fitting that the adroit rascal should find an unknown grave, and that his bones repose far from the scenes of his demonism. Now, if you believe, Zach, that he killed Denia Totten the trail is ended."

"He never killed her," was the prompt answer. "While Prince Peter had few scruples, for he tried to strangle you in the alley, he never killed the victim of the N— street crime."

"You couldn't get Hornets to believe that," smiled the little doctor who had announced his intention of returning to the Department that very day. "The boy is one of the positive kind and would be a bad member of a jury."

Broadway Zach next turned his attention to the house once occupied by Luzilie, and when he mounted the steps he thought of his former visit and seemed to feel the cord again at his throat.

But this time he was not molested and his ring remained unanswered though he repeated it at least several times.

"The lady what has been in thar is gone off," said a voice at his back and Zach turned to see a veritable street Arab in the gutter.

"When did she go?"

"She moved out last night about ten."

"Moved at that hour, did she?"

"I guess so. She came out veiled with a grip in her hand and gave me a quarter to carry it to the first cab."

This was news. The bird had left the nest, but the detective wondered if one could not get inside and take a look at the empty nest anyhow.

The boy who fairly bristled with information which he was inclined to impart for a consideration which was forthcoming, told Zach that the house might be entered from the rear and this advice was taken.

When the Broadway spotter found himself in the hall, and also among the grim shadows that prevailed, he stopped for a moment and listened.

When he moved on it was toward a room on the right and the door yielded to his touch.

It was one of those furnished houses which are rented to people for a short time and the furniture told that it had passed through the hands of several masters.

As Zach shut the door he perceived a strange odor which seemed to have entered with him and a minute later he was in the hallway again.

A staircase ran toward the second story, and he mounted it.

He might have revisited the cellar from which he had effected his escape after the noosing on the front steps, but he did not, and in the first room overhead he stopped, overpowered for an instant by the odor which had assailed him below.

It was a sickening smell which seemed to come from a cupboard set in the wall and Broadway Zach went toward it.

The door did not yield to his touch, but he forced it open and fell back with a startling cry.

He saw that a lot of acids had been poured upon a little heap of papers for the purpose of destroying them and this was the cause of the unpleasant smell.

The strong acid had not only eaten up the papers, but had played havoc with the shelf which it had overrun and the cupboard if left closed much longer would have been set on fire.

When he had recovered, the detective went forward and with a handkerchief pressed against his nostrils, looked into the place with more safety.

That it was a diabolical attempt to destroy the nest was evident, and Zach looked with the more curiosity since he saw that such had been the case.

He was in the act of turning from the scene when a noise saluted his ears and he distinctly heard the shutting of a door.

Broadway Zach sprang across the room and with his eyes glued on the door opposite the cupboard, waited for whoever might come.

He was not kept in suspense very long.

Steps came toward the portal in the hall outside and presently it opened cautiously.

The man who entered the room almost took the detective's breath, and he watched him as he went straight to the cupboard and opened it.

He looked taller than when Zach had seen him last and in the light that came in at the one window of the room he recognized old Fezzam, the man from Algiers.

Totally unconscious of the ferret's presence, the old man looked at the work of the acids for a moment and took a vial from his bosom.

His long hand thrust this into the cupboard and the detective saw the strong liquid fall upon the half-burned shelf, while Fezzam's eye looked like a fiery ball.

With a chuckle which would have done credit to a friend, the old man turned away and left the room.

He left the door ajar and the next instant the ferret of Gotham was treading at his heels.

Into the hall went the man of trails and not until he had reached the head of the stairs did Fezzam know that he was tracked.

He turned that moment and saw the detective.

Zach stopped at the same time and let the old scamp have a good look.

As the Algerine leaned against the wall with his eyes still fixed upon the sharp, a certain pallor overspread his face, but only for a moment.

"You leave home sometimes, I see," said Zach. "You will come to strange houses now and then."

The yellow teeth of the old man were shown by a grin as he regarded Zach, and then, instead of retreating down the staircase, he came toward the sharp, nor stopped

until he could have touched him with his gaunt fingers.

"What brought you hither?" he demanded much to the ferret's surprise.

"Not to find you here, Fezzam. Where is she?"

There was no reply.

Zach wondered if it was worth while to try to frighten this man, whether he could force from him that which he did not care to reveal; he might try it anyhow, for he knew that Fezzam had a wholesome dread of the police.

"You came here to finish what she began," he said. "You poured more of the eating acid upon the shelf and you can count the minutes till the house will be in a blaze."

The little eyes twinkled till they gleamed like the orbs of a snake but the lips did not part.

Zach took another step toward the living statue along the wall.

"You don't care to tell, I see," he went on. "You intend to give us trouble. You know what has become of Fuzilie, the maid; but it is to be your secret till you choose to let it out. Very well. You will come with me, Fezzam."

"With you?"

The old man seemed to shrink into the wall at his back, and when the hand of Captain Zach touched him, a quiver passed over his angular frame.

"Go with you? To the police?" he muttered.

"If you don't intend to give me the truth, yes," answered Zach.

Quick as thought one of the hands vanished beneath the old rascal's robe and when it came out again something was clutched by the fingers.

Zach made a grab for it, but the object was jerked beyond his reach, and as Fezzam sprang down one step, he placed the vial to his lips, threw up his hands, and sunk inanimate on the stairs.

All this had occurred in so short a time that it horrified and nonplused the ferret.

He had never seen anything like it.

Fezzam lay at his feet, to be spurned or carried from the house, and he had to look twice at the shriveled body before he could believe the evidence of sight.

"The old rascal has cheated both me and the law," said Zach, as he bent over the body and placed his hand over the heart. "He will keep the secret of Fuzilie's whereabouts till Gabriel's trump is heard and—Hello! what is this?"

His hand had touched something hard, and as he opened Fezzam's shirt, he drew forth a locket, which he opened as he went to a window near by.

He saw in his hands the face of some one unknown, a face dark like Fezzam's, and strangely resembling Fuzilie's.

While he looked at it he heard the wind that rattled the windows of Blazer's house, and suddenly closing the locket, he turned to where Fezzam had fallen.

A cry broke from his lips when he saw that the stair was untenanted.

Old Fezzam was gone.

Then the fall and the action of the drug was all a hoax. The Algerine had taken the secret thing for the purpose of beating him out of a victory, and that he had succeeded was apparent, for all the detective had captured was the locket with the dark unknown face.

Zach bounded down the steps three at a time, but found no one in the lower part of the house.

He found the back door ajar, and thought he saw a strange shoe-print in the dirt just beyond; but it really told him nothing.

Fezzam was gone!

"I will be at home when he comes back," thought the ferret, and in a minute he was down on the street, his face turned toward the home of the man from Algiers.

It was a race between Fezzam and the detective, but as the latter was blessed with youth and agility, he was likely to win.

It did not take him long to reach the vicinity of the old man's house.

He stopped there and watched the alley.

Ten, twenty minutes passed, but no one came.

He resolved to enter the house, if possible. Perhaps little Zulef, the Magic Child, could tell him something.

He stepped to the door and rung the bell, but this time no answer came.

Determined to get into the house, the Broadway sharp put his shoulder to the door and pushed with all his might.

There was the giving way of a bolt and the portal pitched inward as the city ferret fell headlong into the darkened room.

No one greeted him.

He passed on into the chamber where he had met little Zulef and her guardian, but they were not there.

Springing to the curtain which at times hid the Magic Child he threw it to one side and then uttered a cry.

Zulef lay before him and the detective caught her up and ran into the light.

The little one whose very life had been sapped by the exertions which she had been compelled to go through for old Fezzam's benefit, lay like one dead in Zach Zebedee's arms.

He caught up a pitcher that stood on the table and without looking to see what it contained, dashed its contents into Zulef's face.

The change was sudden and startling.

The child gasped and opened her eyes, but her skin changed from white to red, and the liquid that trickled down her neck dyed everything it touched a bloody hue, until the detective flung the vessel to the floor and saw blood wherever its contents rested.

Little Zulef was still gasping in his embrace.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT BROADWAY ZACH FORCED FROM ROSA.

BROADWAY ZACH carried the child to a chair and placed her there in with her face in the light and her head pillowed on his arm.

She smiled as she seemed to recognize him and her little hand fell like a snowflake upon his.

"I'm glad somebody came. I was feeling so strange in the dark after what Fezzam did."

"What did he do?" eagerly asked the detective.

"He took me up when I was asleep and looked at me a long time till I seemed to sink into a slumber that kept getting deeper and deeper while I appeared to float through the air. It made me so weak that I was afraid I would fall to the ground. But you have come."

"I am here, Zulef. He shall not treat you that way any more."

"No, he will not for he has gone away."

"Not to come back again?"

"Not to come back! When he took me up and began to look at me he said that he was going off forever, but that would leave me in the house."

"He told you that, Zulef?"

"Yes, and I seemed to fall at last from his arms upon a bed of down and that was all."

"Did he get you to see anything for him?"

"I don't know," smiled the little one.

Zach looked at her a moment longer and then tried to wipe the crimson stain from her face; but it would not be erased.

"I will 'see' for you," continued Zulef. "You have been kind and I like you."

"But I don't know how to mesmerize you," said Zach; "I never studied that art, child; but Fezzam knew it well."

"Ah, didn't he?" cried Zulef. "He knew it too well for those who came to see him. But wait! I can go into the sleep of my own accord."

"No, it will weaken you," said Zach. "You are not very strong yet and you should not do it."

"I will do it for you. Maybe I can help you."

The Broadway shadow started.

Maybe she could assist him; perhaps she could give him the lost trail, but he had not the heart to exhaust the fragile thing in the chair.

"I will go to sleep now just like Fezzam used to make me. He did not know that I had this faculty, and I took good care not to tell him, for he might have punished."

Eager as he was to go back to the trail, Zach would have prevented the rash experiment which Zulef insisted on if she had not made a beseeching appeal.

"Please let me, won't you? I am sure I

can as well now as when I was under Fezzam's eye. Look at me and touch my hand with the tips of your fingers. There, that is it!"

He saw her close her eyes and the body in the chair seemed to assume the limberness of a dish-rag.

Zach drew off and looked at her.

"I see a man with a mutilated hand," said Zulef. "I see him sitting in a chair and a man is dressing the stump. His face is white and handsome, and I have seen him before; he has been here to see Fezzam, my old master."

No wonder these words startled Zach, the detective, and recalled the horrors of the railroad wreck.

His breath seemed to stop while he listened to the Magic Child, following her in every word and wondering what mysticism ruled her life.

"I see him in the room with his arm dressed. He is still in the chair and is smoking, something he always did whenever he came to see us. Fezzam called him Prince Peter and he has been hurt."

Zulef seemed about to come out of the strange trance, when all at once she looked again at the watchful detective and smiled faintly.

"Let us walk about the house where Prince Peter is," she said. "It stands among such pretty trees all full of blossoms, and one can not see it from the road for the thick grove that is before it. It is an old place with vines over the door and nearly over the roof. I wonder how Prince Peter came to this place, and how he lost his hand?"

The revelations of the child who knew nothing of the railroad wreck more than startled the man who listened to them.

As she came out of the trance with her little hand resting in Broadway Zach's palm, she greeted him with a smile and then fell back on his arm exhausted.

"We are going away," said the detective.

"We are going from this old shell, Zulef."

"Take me away. I want to see the flowers that grow about the house where Prince Peter is."

The detective lifted her from the chair and carried her from the room.

Emerging from the alley, he hailed a cab and told the driver to drive to No. — Broadway.

He carried Zulef up the stairs which led from a hall on the ground floor and into his room.

"Jehosaphat!" cried Hornets who was on guard as he caught sight of Zach and his little burden. "I didn't know we were going to establish a foundling hospital."

But the moment the boy caught sight of the tiny face framed in soft hair he kissed it and then looked into Zach's eyes.

"When did the angels toss her down to us, Captain Zach?"

Broadway Zach said nothing to Hornets about the vision which Zulef had had for him, but left her in the boy's care while he went into Mulberry street and for a full hour was closeted with the superintendent of police.

Perhaps he told him all; perhaps he narrated the story of his visit to the Blazer house in his search for Fuzilie and all about the vision in the den of Fezzam, the Algerine.

At any rate, when Zach Zebedee walked from the best known building in Gotham he went straight up-town and rung the bell of a house famous now in the annals of unearthing crime.

It was the home of the late Mrs. Totten and the person who opened the door was Rosa.

The girl remembered the man who had been introduced to her by Sergeant Mittens as Mr. Zebedee, and she held the door open for him to enter.

Zach walked without asking into the parlor while Rosa stationed herself at the door, looking at him and awaiting his bidding.

Rosa was pretty, with an oval face and clear brown eyes, a full figure and a handsome head of dark hair.

She was well dressed that day and looked more like the mistress of the house than like a maid in full charge during the absence of its tenant.

"So, miss, you are sure that your friend Captain Kidlace did not come back to the house after bidding your mistress good-night?" asked the detective.

Rosa seemed to start a little and flushed up.

"I believe I have already made that known," said she.

"So you have declared, but I want you to refresh your memory and to go back to that night so fatal to the life of the lady you served."

Rosa made no reply, but came forward and took a chair opposite the man from Broadway.

"You are sure that he did not come back, are you?"

There was no reply, only the clear eyes of the girl became fastened upon Zach, and he saw her hands meet in her lap.

"You are here for the purpose of injuring the captain," she said at last.

"I am not. I am here to get at the truth, which I am sure will not injure Captain Kidlace."

"Do you tell me that on your honor?"

"Upon my honor!"

The girl seemed to think a moment; she was weighing something in her mind, and the ferret waited for her to conclude the battle.

She leaned forward with one of her ringed hands resting on the table cloth and looking at the detective said in a voice just lifted above a whisper:

"I am going to tell you the whole truth, trusting to your honor. He came back that night."

"After he had said good-night to your mistress?"

"Even after that."

"Did you see him, Rosa?"

"I saw him."

"What did he do?"

"He entered the house while I was at the top of the stairs ready to come down to attend to my mistress's wants. He entered the parlor where she was and I waited for him to come out."

"Are you sure it was Captain Kidlace?"

"I am. I have seen him before in this very house, but I tell you, sir, that that awful deed wasn't his work. I know that, sir."

"We may come to that directly, Rosa. How long did he remain in the parlor with Mrs. Totten?"

"It could not have been longer than three minutes."

"And you saw him go out again?"

"I did."

"You never let him know that you were watching him?"

"Mercy, no!" cried Rosa with a smile.

"That I would never do. I am not a professional spy and that is why, for one reason, I did not tell the police about what I saw."

"What was the other reason?"

Rosa looked away and another flush stole over her face, reddening it.

"You will not tell me? You remember that I have given you my promise that I am not trying to draw a net around Captain Kidlace."

"I believe you," cried the girl impulsively.

"Yet you will keep back your reason?"

"No. I will tell you, though it is a confession of which he knows nothing. I love Captain Kidlace."

Her gaze fell to the floor and the detective saw a crimson hue mount to the temples and tarry there.

"For love's sake you did not tell us that Captain Kidlace came back despite what he said in his statement, and that he was with your mistress five minutes or such a matter in this room?"

"That is true. I lied for his sake."

It was a confession which put the maid in a better light before Zach and he smiled when he looked at her.

"Now, Rosa, what did you find when you entered the room? I know what you have told the police and also what you said at the inquest. You found Mrs. Totten dead at the table with a piece of paper before her and a scrawl across the sheet."

"I told them so."

"Was that a little prevarication like the other story? Didn't you, Rosa, keep back something right there, or, in other words, didn't you again play a game to shield the man we have just been talking about?"

The maid tried to rise from the chair, but

without being touched by any one she sunk back and her face became deathly white.

"I see. You are a man without a particle of mercy in your heart. You are one of these men who entangle your fellow-creatures in a net of fate. I felt I would some day have trouble with you the moment we stood face to face the night of the murder. I felt that, I say, and this proves that I was not mistaken."

"You found something on the table which you concealed," said the detective looking at the girl who had relapsed into strange silence with her lips welded.

No answer.

"You will not trust me in full because you believe I am trying to hang Captain Kidlace. I am trying to tighten the noose about the neck of quite another person. I swear this, Rosa. I believe Captain Kidlace innocent of this murder, no matter how dark the affair appears against him at times. If you are determined to enmesh him, why, I shall not interfere any longer."

This time the girl started up and snatched from her bosom a paper which she flung upon the table.

"There! that is what I found under the dead woman's hand!" she exclaimed. "The scrawl which you found when you came I made myself, for I saw what that writing would do in your hands. This is true, as I hope for life in the other world!"

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN KIDLACE IS "COOL."

ZACH ZEBEDEE took the paper from the maid's hand and leaned toward the light.

What had he found?

Rosa watched him with a white face as if she half-doubted his declaration that he did not believe that Captain Kidlace was the guilty man, and while he unfolded the sheet her eyes seemed to blaze, for she lifted them to the opposite wall and saw there, suspended by a red cord, two daggers which her dead mistress had purchased of a dealer in Moorish bric-a-brac.

Broadway Zach read what was on the sheet before him and then looked at the girl.

"You found this on the table, did you, Rosa?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you took it up and left in its place, underneath Mrs. Totten's hand, the scrawl which we carried off?"

There was a nod in reply and the girl looked toward the dagger again.

"Do you know that Kyrle Kidlace, whom you have admitted to this house on more than one occasion, wrote what I hold in my hand?"

"I feared it was his work."

"Written when he came back after bidding your mistress good-night at the door?"

"I—I can't say that."

"Have you seen the captain since the funeral?"

"I have."

"And you did not tell him about the existence of this document?"

"I did not."

"Did you fear to, girl?"

"I cannot say. But why do you question me so close? I don't know that he wrote that letter which I found in the hands of a dead woman. A woman will do a good deal for the man she loves if she loves him."

"That is true, Rosa."

"God helping me, I did not want to see Captain Kidlace dragged into the net, and when I found that letter on the table it flashed across my mind to tear it up and substitute another paper. I did so. I wrote the scrawl which you found when you came, while the real paper was hiding in my bosom."

Zach fell back and looked at the girl.

She talked with an honesty of purpose which he could not doubt.

She was trying to shield her lover, Captain Kidlace, the man who had escorted Mrs. Totten from the play, and in the mind of many, the last person who had seen her alive.

Suddenly the detective spoke again.

"Did you ever see Fuzilie?"

Rosa smiled.

"The girl who was here before me?"

"Yes."

"I saw her once."

"Where?"

"In the house."

"Oh, she was here yet when you came?"

"No, sir. She came back one afternoon when my mistress was out."

"Found you alone, did she, Rosa?"

"She did not see me. You see Fuzilie carried off a duplicate set of keys, as Mrs. Totten spoke to me after I had come. She talked about trying to find the maid through the police for the purpose of getting back the set; but you see she never got to do that."

"Tell me about the girl's visit to the house."

"I did not see her until she was in the act of quitting it, but I went up-stairs and found that some one had been in madam's room."

"Fuzilie, eh?"

"I cannot say, but from what I saw I must conclude that it was her."

"What did you discover, Rosa?"

"She had opened the little dresser and had left stains of fingers on the marble top."

"Why should she leave finger-stains there?"

"I don't know, unless she hurt herself on a pin somewhere."

"You saw her quitting the house, did you?"

"I was at the top of the stairs when she came out of the parlor, where we are now, and stood for half a minute in the hall. I am quite sure it was Fuzilie from what I heard about her afterward."

"Oh, you mentioned the matter to Mrs. Totten, then?"

"I did not."

"To whom, then?"

"To Captain Kidlace."

Zach Zebedee smiled. The girl had a good deal of confidence in her dandy lover and the detective seemed to make a mental note of it.

"I guess that will do, girl," said he, as he let the witness out of his clutches. "Stay! just one moment, Rosa. Do you know anything of a silver box?"

The girl started.

"A little white box which your mistress may have had."

"I have heard of such."

"And have seen it? Come, girl. What you may say will not operate against Captain Kidlace."

She did not speak for a minute, but came toward the ferret and seemed about to make a confession of guilt which she had kept back.

"I sent it to him," she said in low tones.

"He sent for it and—and you must know what a woman will do for her—friend?"

"You mean you sent it to the captain?"

"Yes, yes."

"By whom?"

"By his friend and messenger?"

"Are you sure, Rosa, that the box was sent for by Captain Kidlace?"

"Why, why wasn't it?" cried the poor girl, almost ready to sink to the floor in hysterics. "He told me on his honor that Kyrle had sent after it or I would not have found it for him."

"Well, never mind. Tell me what this man looked like?"

Rosa did so, giving Zach a word photograph of the man who had wormed the fatal box from her and the shadow seemed satisfied.

It was Prince Peter—Prince, the slick fellow, the handsome man whose hand he had seen torn off in the wreck, and whose face shattered by a bullet in the little depot haunted him still.

Prince Peter was omnipresent, it seemed, and the detective did not upbraid Hornets for having such a meager opinion of his honesty and good traits.

"Don't tell him that I have betrayed him," said the girl, glancing down at the paper held by the detective. "You may be an enemy despite what you have said. If you are, I have betrayed him; that is all."

Once outside the house, the detective, if he had looked back, would have seen the dark eyes of the excited girl at the window; but he did not see them, and in a moment he was out of sight.

"Now for the captain himself!" said Zach, as he hurried off.

Twenty minutes later he rung the bell of a good house on a prominent but quiet street of the metropolis, and waited with some impatience the result of his ring.

He was ushered into a dark little room alongside the corridor, where he was told that the captain would be in presently, and also that he would find cigars on the table.

Zach let the latter severely alone while he began to wait, and his eyes took in the appointments of the place, all of which betokened wealth on the part of the owner or lodger.

Steps presently saluted his ears, and as he turned to the door it opened and Captain Kidlace stood before him.

In person this man talked about so much since the murder in the N—street mansion was tall and very prepossessing. He had a magnificent figure, and as he came forward he looked at his guest with a smile which at times came unbidden to his lips.

"You are Mr. Zebedee, the detective," said Captain Kidlace. "I suppose I am indebted to you for this visit on behalf of the affair on N—street. I am glad to see you, sir. Don't you smoke?"

"But seldom. I rarely enjoy the weed, but you seem to have good ones there."

"It don't pay a man to have anything else," was the reply as the dainty hand of the speaker took a cigar from the box.

The match when struck showed off Captain Kidlace's face to better advantage, for the light in the room was poor.

The eyes were sinister and deeply sunken; there was a dark ring around them, but this might mean late hours more than guilt, for Zach Zebedee, notwithstanding what Rosa had said and given him, did not believe that he was looking into the face of the murderer of Denia Totten.

As Captain Kidlace threw the stub of match into the cuspidore, he crossed his legs and asked:

"Well, what success?"

"That's a question which any one interested in this affair would be expected to ask. I am here to ask you a question or two, captain."

"Certainly, and after I have been quizzed by you, will you let me return the compliment?"

"Of course."

Kyrle Kidlace settled back in his chair, but apparently noticing the shadows in the room, he sprang up and crossed the floor.

"A little more light will do better," he laughed as he came back. "Now I am at your service, Captain Zebedee. What can I do for you?"

One of the detective's hands was at the paper which Rosa confessed to having found on the table in front of her dead mistress.

As that hand crept from its place of concealment, the document came with it, but was not released.

"You are aware, captain, that we found on the table at the dead woman's hand a sheet of paper strangely scrawled on by some one. Some believe that it was the last effort of her hand ere life fled—that she tried at that awful hour to fasten the crime upon the right person. Others feel sure that it was left there by the hand which took her life. What is your opinion, captain?"

The expression which crossed the listener's face was a curious one. He took his cigar from between his teeth and laid it on the edge of the table.

He uncrossed his legs and appeared to lean forward in his chair.

"I—I have a theory of my own," said he. "I haven't thought best to air it under the circumstances; but since you have asked for my opinion, I am going to give it whether it hurts any one or not."

"It can't hurt the innocent," was the reply.

"Of course not. My impression is that the girl could tell you a good deal about that paper."

"Fuzilie, the maid?"

Captain Kidlace nodded.

"But what did you see when you went back to the house after bidding Mrs. Totten good-night?"

"I tell you that I didn't get further than the hall."

It was a coolly spoken answer.

"Don't be too sure of some things, captain. You may have peeped into the room where she was."

"Betrayed! I know who did it and all through her infernal jealousy!" and the hand of the captain descended upon the table sending the cigar to the floor.

"Don't become excited," said Zach, looking into the face above him, for Captain Kidlace had risen to his feet and stood in the middle of the room with his eyes full of fire and his hands shut.

"I am cool, and to prove it will show you how my nerve is."

He opened a drawer at his hand and took a revolver from the corner of it.

"That portrait is one of my friend, Jack Moffit, who was drowned off Hatteras last year. You can see the third button on his coat! Ah, yes, you notice it. Now there is no button there!"

The revolver sent out a little report and the canvas on the wall was seen to quiver.

"Come!" said the man, walking over to the picture. "I told you I was cool. You see I have shot the button out," and he turned upon the detective with a smile and coming back resumed his chair.

"The girl has betrayed me—I know it," he said. "You have been to see her, haven't you?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STORY OF A PASSION.

AFTER waiting a moment to let the captain recover from the excitement which ruled him despite the marvelous shot with the revolver, Zach Zebedee let the paper clutched in his hand fall on the table and then he opened it in a manner that the man across the board could see it.

"What's that you have there?" asked Kidlace.

"A bit of paper, sir. Perhaps it has been seen by you ere this. Come and look."

"Oh, the scrawl which was found with the dead woman," cried Captain Kidlace, looking at the sheet.

"You will see that it was not a scrawl after all. It has intelligible words well written and the person who found it saved it from the wreck of death and substituted something else in its place."

"She did, eh?"

"How did you know a woman found it, captain?"

"Simply from the fact that Rosa, the maid, is the person who first made the startling discovery."

"Yet, you took care in your 'statement' to call attention to the fact that Mrs. Totten had just dismissed a maid."

"I did, sir, and by heavens! if you think to trip me into a third statement—I refer to the one I have retracted in part as the second—you have missed the mark."

"No trap, captain. Rosa found this underneath the dead woman's hand. But you haven't read it."

The handsome man caught up the paper and leaned toward the light.

"Great God!" he cried as his eyes seemed to enlarge. "What is this you say? Found where she sat dead in her chair, and yet you got possession of a scrawl which nobody can read?"

Zach watched him narrowly while he read the writing again and again, and when he looked up their eyes met, but there was no revengeful light in the captain's.

"This paper in the hand of an enemy might hang me," said the captain.

"Do you think so?"

"Look at it yourself; but you have read it over and over. Did Rosa find it there?"

"She says she did."

"And kept it?"

"Yes. The girl thinks a good deal of you, captain."

"She—"

What he might have said he kept back and his hand dropped nervously upon the table, the sheet falling from his fingers and landing almost in the detective's hand.

Once more Zach Zebedee read what he had already committed to memory.

The contents of the sheet was as follows: "Kyrle Kidlace, I would have died for you, and to think that you should do this—you—God have mercy on your soul and mine!"

That was all, and in place of this the

authorities had found with the murdered woman, a sheet so scrawled that the best decipherers in the service could not make out anything against any one.

No wonder Captain Kidlace stared at the sheet, and now and then looked up into the detective's face.

"What was she to you?" severely questioned Zach Zebedee. "Don't you think the hour demands the whole truth concerning the past?"

The man across the table with its crimson cloth did not stir.

"You have admitted that you did not include everything in your 'Statement.' You told the inspector that you deliberately erred in several important matters, that you met Mrs. Totten before you said you had, that you knew more about her husband than you admitted in the 'Statement,' and that you went back to the house after bidding her good-night."

"I say that again. But I will say no further."

The lips closed deliberately behind the last words. Zach Zebedee saw that the man was growing wonderfully cool again.

Was there no way to reach him?—no way to the secrets which he appeared to guard?

It was diamond cut diamond, with the kid-gloved man having the best of it.

Broadway Zach folded the sheet without looking at the captain, whose deep little eyes were watching him like a tiger.

"We'll have to find out the rest," said Zach as he thrust the sheet into his pocket and rose.

"What 'rest'?"

"Why, all about your acquaintance with the deceased. You see it comes in anyhow, captain, and since you have made two statements, we are compelled to go ahead and work to suit ourselves."

"And you intend to prove that Mrs. Totten left that writing on the table?"

"The girl found it there. She admits this, but says that she don't believe that Denia meant to accuse you."

"Why, then, didn't she burn it?"

The ferret could not keep back a smile at this sudden question which Captain Kidlace seemed to regret the moment it had passed his lips.

"Women do odd things sometimes when love is at the bottom of it."

"Love?" cried Captain Kidlace.

"She never intended to show this to any one, and would not if I had not drawn the secret from her. She left, so she says, on the table and beneath the dead hands the scrawl which has bothered some of us."

The man in kids pushed back his chair and got up.

He took a nervous turn about the room, passing near the portrait and glancing up at his shot, then he came back and paused before the city shadow at whom he looked for half a minute.

"Why don't you look for the Algerine girl?" he suddenly snapped.

"We may when our trail leads her way," was the reply.

"Oh, you wait for links, do you? Well, well, this is a new way for detectives. You don't move till the wind blows you something tangible."

"Your Statement contained a suggestion which was very shrewd of you, captain, but—"

"You don't believe it, eh?"

"We know that Denia discharged Fuzilie. We know that the girl has the passion of a pantheress and the soft hands of a lady thug. We are aware that she was Mrs. Totten's maid in lands across the sea while her husband was living—"

"Wrong!" broke in Captain Kidlace.

"They never met till after the captain's death."

"Did they meet where you profess to having encountered Denia—in Lyons?"

"No! Hang you, Zach Zebedee, you have the tact of an old timer in mysteries," and the face of the man in kids came so close to the ferret's that he involuntarily started back.

"I was just trying to clear your recollections, nothing more, I assure you, captain."

"Well, here it is!" and Captain Kidlace took his chair again. "Are you ready to listen, Zebedee?"

"Always ready."

The man across the table took a long breath and began:

"We don't care to have this statement taken down, for I won't retract a word of it, no matter what comes. Years ago I went abroad. I was a younger man then than now and had a desire to see what I could of the world before I settled down—a laudable desire, eh?"

"I say yes to that, captain."

"Well, I turned up in that far-away land of the Algerines. I went thither to see how the French got along in a land where they were hated and feared by as fierce a race of people as inhabits the earth. I went to the capital—went there with plenty of money, and at the time, as I swear to you, Zebedee, with no intention of interfering with any man's happiness."

"I will not tire you with a description of the queer society that reigned there at the time, nor of the frequent quarrels between the natives and their armed masters. I could see with half an eye that the former were biding their time and now and then some poor devil of a French soldier was found dead on the waste, or an officer strangled in his quarters—always with a black cord which was left around the neck."

"I was just young enough then to fall in love with the first pretty face I met in that devil's country, and it happened that this time it was the face of one who was the wife of an officer. Denia Totten was very beautiful. She was the acknowledged belle of the old place though she was the wife of the senior captain, as haughty and brave a man as ever led a charge across the deserts."

"It wasn't long before I fell in with an Algerine, who somehow or other got control of me—I can't tell you exactly how, and perhaps the less we say about that the better. I fell in with the band to which this man was blood and soul, and almost before I knew it I belonged to the infamous society of the Black Strangers. You don't seem to start at any revelation I make, Zebedee; but that is your profession. Very well. I like to see a cool man."

"The deeper the accursed order enmeshed me the bolder I became in my love-making. I seemed to plunge into it blindly, for I did not see that the coolness and bravery of Captain Totten prevented the natives from strangling him. They left that death piece to me and they seem to have picked the right victim."

"One night I lost my head and another man his life. Such was almost sure to be the outcome of my wildness. Captain Totten and I stood face to face just beyond the walls of the fort, with the shadows of the trees concealing our figures, and we were armed with swords. Behind me, though I knew it not at the time, stood the men of the Black Cord. I saw no one but Captain Totten—thought of nothing but his pretty wife. He advanced and threw out his hand. There was a light on his face which mystified me. He was the better swordsman, and seemed to know that he could kill me at his notion."

"I refused to apologize—that was all he asked, and upon the honor of a man he promised to keep it a secret; we came together and in a moment I saw that I was a novice in his hands."

"I want no man's blood, no matter how gross his insult is," said he.

"I laughed in his face, taunted him about his wife's beauty, threw one of her stolen gloves at him, and we were point to point in a jiffy. Something passed me at a time when the point of Captain Totten's blade was at my throat. I caught the glitter of steel and then struck with all my might. He fell like a leaden statue."

"A moment later I was seized and whirled from the spot. Hands that seemed to burn wherever they touched hastened me from the grove through the edge of the city and for ten days I cannot tell what happened. Then I found myself on the Mediterranean in the hold of an Algerine bark, and my flight to France was without adventure. From France I traveled over Europe and at last in Paris, a year after the duel, came face to face with Denia Totten. The Black Cord had been found round her husband's neck, though a lance-wound was in his breast. Did I kill him? I don't know."

"From France I followed her to America. We were friends, for I kept as a secret the

story of the duel in Algiers. Now, that is where I first met Denia Totten. You have that much of Captain Kidlace's narrative; and here it ends."

The lips met, the eyes got their old gleam, and Captain Kidlace picked up another cigar.

"So you met her in Algiers; so you know something about the Black Cord? You might tell me something about the poison which, when dropped into the human eye, takes life as surely as the cord or the dagger. They say that one with the death agent in his eye sees the past, and that before him rises something of the future. It is hinted, too, that the last thoughts call for pen and ink or pencil, and that sometimes the murdered person, with the hand of death at his heart-strings, can write the story of his own killing—"

"Stop!" cried Captain Kidlace. "By heavens, man, you are going a little too far in my own house. I have told you all I intend to reveal. I saw Denia Totten twice that night. I went back into her house after I had left it. You may call me the right man and arrest me at once. I am cool again. But let me tell you that the moment you lay hands on Captain Kidlace you lose the game forever."

Zach Zebedee said nothing.

What he thought at that exciting moment he kept to himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAIMED FUGITIVE.

THE sudden flight of old Fezzam, the Algerine, from the den in which he had duped hundreds, partially through the marvelous powers displayed by little Zulef, astonished more than one person.

Zach Zebedee, the ferret, was not the only person startled by the old fellow's disappearance as we shall see.

The night which followed his interview with Captain Kidlace in that worthy's apartments, a figure well veiled came down the alley and rapped at Fezzam's door.

Of course it was not opened, for the charlatan was not at home, and the person among the shadows of the alley waited ten minutes and then drew back.

"Why not see a little further?" this person said, going back to the door again, and this time a gloved hand was put out and the knob turned.

The portal opened and the woman, for woman the caller was, walked into the silent room.

It was dark save where a straggling ray of light from somewhere on the outside fell across the floor, and the woman lifted her veil revealing a dark though pretty face with a pair of keen eyes set in it.

She looked in vain for Fezzam of Algiers.

If she had come to the house for the purpose of consulting the old man she did not let on, but crossed the first room and entered the one where Fezzam had worked.

Here she looked in vain for the former occupants of the place and disappointed at last, turned to go.

As she did this her eye caught sight of something lying on the floor at her feet and she picked up a little ring which she may have remembered seeing on Zulef's hand.

She started at sight of the bauble which she carried to the light and at last put it to her lips and kissed it.

"I wonder what has become of them. They seem to have left the place in a hurry and—"

The door opened behind her and the footstep which came toward her made her turn and face the maker of it.

A man whose face was hidden in part by a soft hat, the rim of which dropped over his brow, confronted her, and as she fell toward the wall, trying all the time to get a better look at the man, he advanced and said:

"This is better luck than I looked for. This is finding a trump when you thought all were in the hands of the enemy."

The woman did not know what to make of such words. She had not had time to drop her veil, and he was looking into her face with eyes that had the glitter of a serpent's.

"He said I might find you here," continued the man. "I told him that I would find

you if possible. I have been to the other house and you were not there so I came to this old den as a last resort."

"From whom do you come? I don't understand you. Who sent you to find me?"

In reply the man extended a letter which she took eagerly and carried it to the light.

He watched her closely while she broke the seal and read it without once looking up until she had reached the end of the last sentence.

"What is the matter with him?" she asked.

"You will see when you meet him. It was the strangest thing in the world. It could not happen more than one time in a million."

"And you are to show me where he is?"

"Such are my orders."

"I will go."

She thrust the letter among the folds of her dress, withdrew her hand and went toward him.

"Come, I am ready now. But how did you find this place? Did Fezzam tell you—"

"I don't know Fezzam, but I do know this city. I guess that accounts for my finding you. Ready, are you? What has become of the little girl who could see things with her eyes shut?"

"I don't know," answered the woman. "It is as much of a mystery to me as to you. I am through here."

They went out together, the man pulling his hat lower as he stepped into the alley, and she, looking at him once more, kept close to his side.

The woman had pulled her dark veil down again. She flitted along like one of the shadows of the city, and when the pair had reached the river with the ferry-house looming up before them, the man stopped and looked at her.

"It's not a very long ride, and we will get there by eleven."

They crossed the river and sat for half an hour in the depot from which Zach Zebedee dogged Prince Peter to the cars, and thence to the terrible collision which we have described.

They took seats apart in the same coach and were whirled along over the plains and hills of Jersey, the man now and then looking at the woman as if he were trying to read her thoughts.

"Come," said he when the train stopped at a small station, the lights of which revealed a few straggling houses set in a clump of trees. "We will leave the cars here."

She looked at him, got up and they went out.

As they stepped upon the platform, he took her arm and led her away.

"How far is it?" she asked, the first words she had spoken in an hour.

"Not more than a mile. We won't take a rig, first because there are none here for us to take, and secondly, we don't care to be seen, eh, miss?"

"That is true. I don't care to be seen at any rate."

At the end of ten minutes, during which time they had reached a rather desolate part of the country, with the lights of the little Jersey town far behind them, the man opened a gate and they entered a yard filled with trees.

"You don't see the house yet. It is so cleverly hidden that even in daylight it is not visible from the road. They could not have taken him to a more secluded place."

"I am glad of that, only I hope it is not so bad as you have intimated."

"It is bad enough for him," was the answer, as they came to a flight of steps which led up to the door of a dark house.

The man rapped and the door was instantly opened.

They were ushered into a small room where a man sat in a chair with his arm resting in a sling.

The moment the woman who had come from New York saw him she stopped and then glanced at her escort.

"You made me believe that it was very bad," she said. "See! he is not much hurt," and then she went forward and bent over the man in the chair.

It was Prince Peter, white and rather thin, as if he had been cooped up for months; but the moment he saw the veil removed and the lustrous eyes of the dark-faced girl were

fastened upon him, he put out the good arm and drew her closer.

They were alone now, for the woman who had admitted them and the guide had left the room.

"How bad is it?" asked the girl.

"It might have been worse," laughed Prince Peter. "I never saw anything like it. Did you see him ere you left New York?"

"Fezzam?"

"No, Zach Zebedee, the shadow?"

"I didn't. In fact, I was looking for Fezzam when the man found me. The old place is empty and both Fezzam and little Zulef are gone."

"Gone, are they?" said Prince Peter, a smile overspreading his face. "Well, I shan't object if they keep out of my way hereafter. I am glad he found you, Fuzilie. Under your care and good nursing I will get along; but I will henceforth go through life with one hand missing."

"Not that!" she exclaimed, her gaze falling again to the bandaged member in the sling. "Won't you tell me how you came to this out-of-the-way place?"

Prince Peter proceeded and told her about his arrest on the train by Zach, the detective, and then described the crash and the dreadful accident on the rail.

"When I had been carried into that shed of a depot and found myself left there in one corner with my arm bandaged by a young doctor who happened to escape with his life, I wondered what I had best do. I knew that the detective was alive, for he had carried me from the wreck and had left me in the surgeon's care. The place was dark and ill-smelling. It was, moreover, filled with the groans of the wounded and dying and was a perfect Bedlam of horrors."

"I resolved as I lay there never to go back if I could help it with the man who had dogged my footsteps from New York. Near me lay a poor wretch who was dying, as I could see even in that poor place. He looked a man of my build, and his arm was bandaged pretty much like mine, but that was not the real cause of his agony. He was hurt internally, and when I saw him in the last gasps of death a terrible resolve came over me and I waited for the last struggle with devilish glee."

"We were alone in the depot, the wounded I mean, for the doctors and their assistants had gone back to the wreck burning outside the place. The man at my side died with a gurgle and with his eyes turned to me with a last appeal for help. I did not wait long after that. As I leaned toward him I had my revolver in my hand, and the next moment it touched his face. In another there was a dull report which was scarcely heard by any one above the groans of the victims of the accident, and the man's face had been torn into irre recognizable shreds, for the ball had plowed its way through flesh and muscle. The next act you will regard as that of a demon, girl. I tore the bandages from the dead man's arm. With my one hand I worked fast and saw that he had a broken wrist besides the other hurts which had sapped his life."

"My knife went to work now and I severed the hand at the wrist and threw it across the room, then rose and stepping over the poor wretches, I made my way from that place and rushed out into the night. I cared not whither I went so it was from that depot, and in my flight I encountered a man from whom I recoiled till he assured me that I need fear nothing."

"He was the man who accompanied you from New York, and what was my joy and surprise when he told me that he could find for me an asylum near by where I would be safe. That is how I came to this place; and here I have been ever since, trying to believe that the adventure was nothing more than a wild creation of fancy; but these bandages tell me that it is real and that I am a cripple for life."

Prince Peter paused and watched for a moment the look which lit up Fuzilie's eyes.

She had listened to every word without once interrupting him.

Now she bent lower, and for a moment remained speechless as she contemplated the handsome face and the flashing eyes which seemed to blaze with the light of vengeance.

"If he had not had you chained to him, Prince, you would not be maimed for life!" she exclaimed.

"You are right, girl. That steel manacle seemed to cut through bone and tendon like a knife. When I fell from him in the car I thought the chain had broken, but one look dissipated that brief dream, for I saw the manacles dangling from his wrist while my hand lay on the floor beside me."

"We must pay for that!"

Prince Peter said nothing, but seemed to take delight in watching the pale face above him.

"We will pay him back! I will do it myself," said the girl through clinched teeth. "You know what I can do, Prince. I will nurse you back to health and then we will show this man-hunter that vengeance never sleeps and that there are eyes that shut not as well as his, and that he, cunning as he is, can be baffled and all his plans end in—death!"

She looked surpassing beautiful as she stood before him, her fine figure drawn to its full height, and her eyes ablaze.

What did Prince Peter think of at that moment?

As he lifted his eyes and caught hers she bent over and kissed him.

"You have but one hand for him, but remember, I have *two*!" and falling back she straightened in the middle of the room and a dagger with a shining black hilt flashed in the light.

"This is as sure as the Cord!" cried Fuzilie.

CHAPTER XV.

MASTER HORNETS AS A DECEIVER.

THE Broadway detective recalled Captain Kidlace's last words more than once during the hours that flitted over his head after he had left that worthy.

"The moment you lay hands on Captain Kidlace you lose the game forever!"

There was no doubt that these words, spoken with a certain emphasis by a cool man, meant a great deal.

Captain Kidlace had stopped in the narrative of his life just in the wrong place for the detective. Zach wanted to know more, but the lips met firmly at the end of the first chapter and the speaker had refused to proceed.

"Never mind. We will get at the rest of the history," said he to himself. "Yes, Captain Kidlace, we will have the veil lifted and see you as you are—the lover of Rosa as well as the supposed slayer of Captain Totten among the suburbs of the Algerine city."

Broadway Zach had walked from the house watched by a man behind the curtains.

"Now for Fuzilie," said the ferret. "I must find the dismissed maid and she shall supply the missing links, for she can."

He went to his room and found the irrepressible Hornets at home.

The boy who had installed himself in the detective's chair hustled into another and his face got a comical look as he regarded the trail sharp.

"Got in at last, eh? Been waiting for you. I've had a time."

Zach looked at the boy who never waited to be questioned when he had anything to tell and the next moment Hornets was talking away.

"Mother Doss, Prince Peter's mother, is in a stew," he said. "I've just come from there, and this time I wasn't in any danger of being thrown from the window for the Prince wasn't there to do it. The old lady seems to have heard of the accident which has got into the paper and she is in a pickle. The account of the man who shot himself in the depot, you recollect, is what startles her, for one of the papers tries to identify him by a ring which it says was found by the body. Now, that was Prince Peter's ring, and the old woman is shrewd enough to see it at a glance. She's going after it."

"Going to where the wreck took place?"

"That's just what she's going to do. And I've promised to go with her."

"Did she ask for your company, Hornets?"

"Not exactly, but when I told her that I knew Jersey like a book and that I don't think it safe for an old lady like herself to go on such a heartrending errand alone, she consented and I came here for a change of duds and to wait a little while for you."

Zach recalled the marvelous vision of "little Zule" in old Pezzam's house when he went thither and found it deserted by all save the wonderful child; how she had "seen" Prince Peter alive in some strange house behind a lot of trees, and how she had described the place so well that he could almost see it himself despite the distance that separated him from the scene of the wreck.

"You must go with the old woman, Hornets," he said. "Don't neglect this opportunity. You will go with your eyes open."

"I always do that for I am interested in Prince Peter, who is believed to be dead and buried somewhere among the sand-hills in Jersey; but who may be alive and kicking, for a

cat like him has more lives than one, and the man who was found dead in the corner of the depot may not have been the Prince. A case of mistaken identity, you see, Captain Zach, not so wonderful when you come to think of what a shrewd fellow Prince Peter is and what sort of game he is playing against you and the law."

Hornets who had dressed previous to the ferret's return now made preparations for departure and Zach, eying him, said with a smile.

"Now, don't make a fool of yourself in any way, but keep a cool head and advise me. You know the cipher code, boy, and you have gumption enough to get out of any snap into which you may fall over in Jersey."

"Bet your life, Zach. Well, good-night," and the figure of Hornets vanished from the room and the door closed upon him, leaving the detective alone with his thoughts.

Hornets proceeded at once to Mother Doss's and in a little while was in the room seeing the old woman pack a small old-fashioned valise which looked very like a family heirloom.

"Anything more, Mother Doss?" asked the boy.

"Another account which one of the neighbors fetched in awhile ago. Over there it is."

The woman designated a newspaper with a nod and the boy picked it up.

Some one—the neighbor probably—had marked the paragraph of so much importance to the old woman and he read it while she worked.

"It begins to look much like Prince Peter," said the boy.

"Of course it does. It is no one else and the ring which the other paper spoke of told the tale."

"Well, you're ready now?"

The old woman retired to another room and in a few moments emerged from it in her "traveling dress," as Hornets called it, and ready for the trip.

Just as Hornets picked up the valise, which he insisted upon carrying, the door opened and a frowzy-headed girl made her appearance.

"This for you, Mother Doss, I guess," said she, as she handed out a letter which the eye of Hornets coveted at once.

"I fear to look inside," said the old lady, as she turned to the light with the letter in her hand.

"Deputize me for the purpose, then," said Hornets. "I can stand anything, from a kick to a store-box on the wharf at night."

But the letter was withdrawn and the woman proceeded to look at it herself.

"I never saw such stuff as this!" she suddenly cried. "Is it Greek or what?"

"I studied Greek once in a college not to be mentioned owing to the sacredness of by-gone scenes," remarked the watchful boy. "I think I could read the rigmale of the Obelisk with a little care. What does the letter say, Mother Doss? It may be confirmatory of the sad taking off of the late lamented Prince Peter."

"Read it if you can," cried the old woman in her dilemma, as she handed the letter to the boy who took it with well concealed delight.

It was a scrawl sure enough as he saw at a glance, but he kept his head and began to make it out to himself.

"Read aloud as you go," cried Mother Doss, leaning toward the boy and fixing her dark eyes upon him. "The secrets of the letter will belong to both of us, so go ahead and read aloud."

By this time the boy had grown accustomed to the "pot-hooks" on the sheet before him, and knew what to read and what to skip.

He read as follows:

"DEAR MADAME:—

"I write you at the request of a gentleman well known to you who is now in this city, a little the worse for the wreck which has shocked a great many people. He was in the collision on the railroad, but fortunately escaped with his life, though he passed through thrilling scenes. You will come to him at once if you can and let no one but the most intimate friend know anything about this letter."

"I sign this for him at his request as he knows that he can trust me."

"PRINCE PETER."

"Good! My fears did not pan out," cried Mother Doss when the boy finished. "We will go to him, but you didn't tell me where the letter came from, boy?"

"You see the absence of a post-mark came from the fact that it was carried to this city by some one who intrusted it to the little girl for delivery in this house. But the letter is dated at Philadelphia and I think for the common good of humanity, Mother Doss, that it should be given to the flames."

"That's right, that's right, Hornets. Burn all such letters."

The boy walked over to the lamp and suddenly thrusting the letter into his bosom, took another dingy envelope from his pocket and held it over the flame till it was consumed.

If he had read the letter as it was written he would have startled Mother Doss beyond measure, for the true rendering of the communication was like this:

"MOTHER DOSS:—

"I have just reached the city from the bedside of one in whom you are interested, Prince Peter. He has met with a terrible accident and is suffering greatly in a secluded house in Jersey where he is safe and where he would be pleased to see you at once about some matters which need looking after. If you will come to his side now you will save yourself a good deal of worry in the future and the secret of the past will be safe still. He escaped from the wreck but maimed for life though still able to take swift vengeance upon the shadows of the trail. Go over to the Jersey City depot and buy a ticket for New Brunswick, but get off at 'Sandycroft.' See that you come alone and that you reach the place after dark. Walk east from the platform about a mile to a clump of trees behind which you will find a house. Rap three times with a slight interval between the raps at the door and you will see Prince Peter. Be careful and don't let any one follow you. This is a dangerous bit of business; but you are shrewd enough, he says, to play the game out."

"Written for the Prince who cannot use his hand yet."

JACK."

This would have startled the old woman beyond measure if Hornets had read it to her, but the sharp boy had made up a letter as he passed along and the result was that the woman was completely hoodwinked.

The valise was picked up again and Mother Doss looked into her purse to see if she had two fares to Philadelphia.

"I'll draw on my bank if you haven't the wherewithal," said Hornets, thrusting his hand into his pocket.

"I've got it, so let's go. I am anxious to see him. The letter gave the street and number, of course?"

"Oh yes; No. 1003 Fuglehorn street, near the Bonaparte Statue, Philadelphia. I know where it is, been there a dozen times and more. Are you ready now?"

Mother Doss was ready and the strange pair left the house.

Hornets was "on nettles" until they pulled out of the depot and he found the train carrying them across New Jersey.

He look with suspicion at everybody in the car and particularly at a man who occupied a seat in one corner and who was trying to read by the light of the lamp overhead.

"I don't like him much," thought Hornets. "Wish Zach was on the train, but as he isn't, I will have to play the game myself. It was uncommon lucky that the letter fell into my claws; lucky, too, that I made it out for her the way I did, seeing her take it all in. Fuglehorn street! I wonder where she'll find it when she gets to the city, while I will be in quite another place?"

When the train slowed up at "Sandycroft" Hornets saw the man in the back seat move and pick up a grip at his feet.

He started toward one door and the boy broke for the other.

Mother Doss, who had dropped into a doze, did not see these actions and as the train moved again, the nimble boy dropped from the steps to the ground on the side opposite the depot and crawled away in the dark.

"Good luck to you, Mother Doss, and forgive me this trick. I can't help it, for Zach approves and that's enough," said Hornets as he watched the flying train.

A moment later the boy-spy turned toward the depot but saw nothing of the man who had attracted his attention in the car.

He had vanished like a specter.

"A mile from the platform, eh?" he said to himself. "I've got my bearings already, so here goes for the place where Prince Peter is taking things as easy as he can after the accident."

Hornets went over the ground as nimbly as he could and at last he drew up in front of something large and dark which proved to be a clump of trees.

"The house lies behind it. Wonder if they have any dogs here?" he thought. "I'd go on if the ground was sown with bloodbonds for this mission is for justice and Captain Zach."

He found a gate open and went into a dark yard.

In another moment he saw indistinctly the outlines of a house ahead and just then a door opened showing him for half a second a lighted room beyond.

The figure of a man was visible while the light prevailed and when the door shut again all was as dark as before.

"I guess this is the biggest and the best link of the whole chain. I will paralyze Zach with the word I send him," and moving on again, Hornets drew near the house and put his face against the window panes.

The sight he saw bewildered him for a moment, but he did not lose his head.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN A YELLOW FIEND'S POWER.

HORNETS at the window of the house behind the trees saw a man seated in an arm-chair which was drawn up to an old-fashioned hearth

on which blazed a few faggots which threw their weird light over the room and its contents. It was a small room with a high ceiling, and here and there on the walls were poor prints of men famous in years past; but they did not chain long the rapt attention of Zach Zebedee's little Vidocq.

The boy was looking at the man in the chair, when the door to his left opened and there came into the room a person at whom Hornets looked in amazement.

He knew him despite the facial change which he had undergone since he saw him last in the cars.

It was the man whom he had watched while riding with Mother Doss, even then flying on toward the Quaker City, perhaps unconscious of the loss she had sustained; but now the man stood forth in his true character and the boy saw old Fezzam, the tenant of the alley.

The Algerine had found Prince Peter and as he came forward with his little eyes fastened on the one-handed dandy, the face of the Prince underwent a change and he looked savagely at the dark-featured foreigner.

Hornets wondered if he was to be permitted to hear what should pass between the men, but this was settled when Fezzam's lips parted and he heard him distinctly.

"Well, I have found you and you have been winged," said the old man.

Prince Peter lifted the bandaged arm, but soon dropped it back upon the arm of the chair.

"I never believed it was you," continued Fezzam. "You are not the kind that get killed in such accidents."

"I might as well have been killed," was the reply. "You see how I am fixed—maimed for life, and marked by the accident and the detective's manacles."

"What did he want of you?"

"Don't you know? You sent me to the work."

"I?"

"You!" growled Prince Peter. "You told me to get it from him if he really had it. After I lost it in the street and after you had removed the snake from before my face, making me swear to do whatever you commanded, you sent me out to hunt it and when I found it I tried to get it back."

"Well, where is it?"

"Why, I didn't get it," laughed Prince Peter. "He may have had it at one time—they said, you know, that he took it away from the 'Emergency' after it was found on the boy who was run over by the wagon—but when I tackled him in the alley it wasn't on his person."

"Do you think he left it in the ferret's care?"

"I can't say. I wouldn't doubt it—not at all."

"Have you sent for the girl?"

Prince Peter drew back, and for a moment looked at Fezzam with some resentment.

"I have a right to send for a nurse, haven't I? You see what sort of fix I am in—housed up here and compelled to remain hidden like a hunted wolf."

"They believe you dead. They have buried you over yonder with the other unidentified dead."

"That's all right if they will believe it. What if the detective should take a notion that I am still in the land of the living?"

"But you have played it on him. You are a dead man, I say."

"Well, that relieves me, but still I don't propose to leave this place till I am sure of it. That man is cool and nervy. He did what few would have done. He took a seat beside me, when he must have known that a quiver would have given him away and cost him his life, for I would have shot him dead in the wreck, if nowhere else. How did you get here?"

"I came by train."

"Where's the child?"

Old Fezzam's face changed color again.

"I left her at home for the present. I may say forever."

"What mean you?"

"I may never go back to the city."

"Are they after you, too?"

The answer Prince Peter received was a sudden stooping on the Algerine's part, and the wrinkled hand of Fezzam fell lightly upon his arm.

"Softly there!" he said, sternly. "I am all-powerful. They cannot prevail against the head of the Black Cord in America."

"You don't know what this detective will do. Why don't you go back and finish him?"

"And spare the other man?"

"Captain Kidlace?"

"Yes."

"You needn't spare him. All you have to do is to make the police believe that he lied all through the Statement he took to Mulberry street. Don't you see, Fezzam? Ha, ha, ha!"

Prince Peter's merriment did not affect the man who listened.

"The day for that man is coming," said Fezzam. "He is in the toils, for the Black Cord punishes all traitors, though they seem beyond its power for a time. He did lie in the Statement, but it was for a purpose. He wanted to keep the past, that was all. He didn't care to have the police, and especially this cool-headed

hunter, on his track, for the newspapers have called attention to him in the affair of the mansion. But the silver box and the blue vial?"

"I have told you that I don't know what became of them."

"We must have them. We must not let them remain in the hands of the Black Cord's foes."

"Well, you see how I am fixed."

"Let the girl try her hand, then. She is as shrewd as the shrewdest, and in her veins is the blood of some of the slyest of her countrywomen."

"But she might object."

"She dare not!" cried Fezzam. "She belongs to the Cord. She shall go and find it!"

Prince Peter looked away for a moment, and then turned his eyes slowly upon the old man, who seemed to rule with an iron hand.

He dared not face him as he had faced Captain Kidlace.

He dared not look into old Fezzam's eye and tell him that he was himself in the shadow of justice, and that he (Prince Peter) knew something the police would like to hear.

"When the girl comes we will see what she says to it, but she must go," said Fezzam.

"You have sent for her. Good! She will come, and then we will have the box found and all will be safe again."

"When she comes she will speak and decide for herself," said Prince Peter.

"She will obey the Black Cord!"

For a moment the crippled man shut his eyes and clinched the only hand he had left.

As he stretched out his slippered feet toward the fire, he seemed to measure the figure which threw its shadow across the floor.

The door opened behind him and a woman came in.

"Bring me the box, Mirza," said Prince Peter.

The woman at once retired, and was gone for a minute.

When she came back again she carried in her hand a box, which was hidden in the folds of a newspaper.

Prince Peter took it and placed it on the table beside his chair.

"There they are," said he, looking up into Fezzam's face. "There are all the jewels. I had them on my person when the accident occurred. I don't care about taking care of them any longer."

"They are not mine," cried Fezzam. "You have them by right of division."

"But I don't want them, I say. I won't have them."

"You don't mean that you are going to turn traitor, too?"

"I mean that you are not going to make Fuzilie bow to the dictates of the Black Cord."

Old Fezzam laid his hand on the box, but immediately removed it.

"Maybe the accursed things will burn," cried Prince Peter, catching it up and looking at the fire.

"Devil! you shall not!" and the hand of Fezzam clutched his wrist. "You must not throw them into the fire."

"Then say that Fuzilie when she comes shall not be sent back after the other box."

"I will not."

Prince Peter seemed to sink deeper into the chair.

"When will she be here?" asked Fezzam.

"I don't know."

"But you certainly told her to come at some certain hour?"

"I did."

"When was that?"

"I won't tell you."

It was almost open rebellion, and Fezzam knit his brows.

"Don't you know, man, that you belong to the Black Cord—that even now on your skin is a brand which the police of New York would delight to gaze at, to say nothing of your past?"

"I know everything, devil!"

"And have you forgotten the oath you took when I spared your life with the green snake showing his fangs in your face?"

"God never endowed me with the power of forgetfulness," bitterly answered Prince Peter.

"Very well, then. You know what to do. You know what overtakes all traitors to the Black Cord."

"But the girl—she has suffered enough."

The Algerine, looking at Prince Peter, broke into a derisive laugh which did not abate one particle the whiteness on the maimed man's face and lips.

"But for us—you and me—she would not be what she is to-day—a creature in the toils—a hunted she wolf, a person looked for by one of the coolest and most merciless of the ferrets of this city. He will not spare her if he can find her; he manacled me and held on until force tore us apart, and even then he came back through the wreck to carry me out, as he thought, to the gallows. You must not make Fuzilie the death-agent of the Black Cord. You shall not force her back after the silver box. Wait till I can travel; wait till my arm heals. I will go myself."

"We cannot wait. It may be even now in

the hands of some enemy and every day is precious."

Prince Peter made no reply.

He only seemed to pull himself together for some dreadful ordeal and when Fezzam stepped back he sprung up and started after him.

"Not yet, my crippled tiger!" suddenly laughed the Algerine as he whirled and came toward Prince Peter. "You see that I am your master and you disobey me at the risk of two lives. You love the girl; I knew that long ago, but you must not try to take her from the rule of the Cord. She joined us voluntarily—"

"It is false!" broke in Prince Peter. "You know how she came to enter the League. It was not of her choice. She fell into the trap you set for her; she fell under the spell of your accursed hypnotic powers across the waters; just as I did, and now, with what she has done for the Black Cord, and she has done more than her share, you would force her to the bottom of the ladder."

"I would, and she shall descend to the lower round if it be the wish of the Black Cord," was the response. "You, Prince Peter, whelp with the brand on your back, if you resist, you will feel its power and she will find for us the missing box or wear a brand as dark as your own."

There was no remonstrance now on Prince Peter's part.

If Fezzam had not turned when he did he might have measured his length on the floor, but the strange eyes of the old man were exerting their powers and the man in the chair looked at him and even smiled.

It was a marvelous sight which Hornets at the window had never seen before, and when Prince Peter was completely under the spell Fezzam opened his collar and threw back his clothes.

His soft hands exposed the man's flesh between the shoulder-blades, and Hornets saw him take from his bosom something like a black pencil with which he seemed to make a mark on Prince Peter's back.

This done he restored the clothes, stepping back and with folded arms and the expression of a fiend in yellow, watching the maimed sport in the chair.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TWO TELEGRAMS.

It was the night after these occurrences that Fuzilie reached the house near Sandycroft and found Prince Peter in the arm chair nursing his wounded arm.

We have witnessed the interview between the pair, yet strange as it may seem to the reader after the last chapter, Prince Peter had not mentioned his conversation with Fezzam the night before.

Was the spell still over the maimed man? or was the old Algerine near enough to watch on their movements and to suppress any signs of rebellion which he might discover.

The face of Prince Peter during his interview with Fuzilie, the fair Algerine and the dismissed maid of Mrs. Totten, was white and cold.

He seemed to be laboring under some excitement which he could hardly suppress; but as the moments wore on and he did not mention the startling interview of the night before, Fuzilie came to note his looks.

The girl, after her vow that she would take vengeance on Zach Zebedee for the maiming of the man to whom she had given her love, fell away and went to the door.

The gaze of Prince Peter followed her.

Suddenly she came back and knelt on the floor at the side of his chair.

"Good-by! I am going back now," she cried. "You will get along here and I will cheer you with good news."

"You shall not, Fuzilie. You shall not pit yourself against the man-hunter—the would-be unraveler of the mystery of N— street."

"But you can't strike him; therefore Fuzilie must."

"No, no. You will go but not to strike him. You must swear that, girl."

"Then, why shall I go at all?"

"I will tell you. I am in the toils here and you will be when he comes back?"

"When who comes back?"

The lips of Prince Peter bent over the girl and his eyes looked down upon her with deep pity.

"When the serpent in our garden comes you will be in the coils at once," he answered. "You must not stay and confront him."

"That is just why I will remain!" she cried, and was on her feet with the last words still on her lips. "I will stay now. The detective can have his life till then. Where is this serpent, and when did he come?"

The answer was the opening of a door and Fezzam, the Algerine, entered the room.

Fuzilie and Prince Peter turned and looked at him.

The old man stopped near the door and looked at the girl.

"Stand up, Keta!" he said.

At sound of this strange but softly sounding name Fuzilie, who had dropped back upon her

knees in an act of devotion toward Prince Peter, sprung erect and faced the old man.

"You are accursed unless you obey the Cord," he cried, covering her with his finger. "You will obey the commands of the League this very night and go back."

She looked at Prince Peter and then at the speaker.

"What does he want of me?" she asked, looking again at the man in the chair.

"This! It is what the Black Cord demands. The silver box is lost. It was found by that man yonder, but it got out of his hands. You must go back and find it again."

"What is in the box?"

"The child of the Cord must ask no questions. I will tell you where to look for it—"

"For you are the head of the Black Cord in this country! Is that it, Fezzam? In your own land you had no such powers, for there you would not have dared to call me by the name you have just mentioned."

Fezzam seemed to wince.

"Prince Peter has given his consent for you to go back."

"Is that true?"

The Prince tried to speak, but the gaze of Fezzam stopped him and he made a slight gesture of assent.

"If he consents I go," cried Fuzilie. "If he looks at me and nods I am still the Child of the Cord."

Old Fezzam spoke rapidly for a minute.

"You will go back and look for the silver box in the room of the ferret of Gotham. You need not look for it where the little doctor is unless you fail to find it in the detective's den. Once found, you will bring it to me."

"Where will you be?"

"Here."

"Then I go. When can I get a train back?"

"In half an hour. You must go to-night. If you find the box, girl, and deliver it to me you need no longer be called the Child of the Cord."

Fuzilie, in a transport of sudden delight, clasped her hands and uttered a cry.

"Is that true?" asked Prince Peter, looking at Fezzam.

"I have spoken, sir, and my word is good."

Fuzilie sprang toward her lover and bent over him, her hand in his.

"Go!" cried Prince Peter. "Find the box and bring it back. He must have it, for I couldn't find it on the little doctor's person. Shed no blood, girl. Your day of revenge may come ere long; but let the ferret feel nothing but the hand of theft just now."

"It shall be as you say."

Their lips met and Fuzilie stepped back and stood ready for further orders.

"Come," said Fezzam. "You must go now."

When half-way across the room the dark-eyed girl, seized by a sudden impulse ran back and caught Prince Peter's hand again.

For a moment her lips seemed to touch his ear and what she said brought a flush to his face.

"I am ready now—ready to go into the lion's den for the Black Cord!" she cried as she rejoined Fezzam.

The old man led her from the house and they went down the tree-lined path together.

They did not see the darker shadow that crept at their heels; they failed to see the little figure which flitted hither and thither with the noiselessness of the true spy.

It followed them down the old road; it went with them to the depot which they reached just as the headlight of the east-bound train flashed in the distance like a star.

Fuzilie boarded the train as it pulled alongside the platform for a few seconds, and in another moment Fezzam was left alone.

The spy stood near by, watching him with a pair of keen, boyish eyes, and when the old Algerine walked back toward the house behind the trees the boy entered the depot where the ticking of a little instrument greeted him.

Master Hornets, still on the trail for his friend Zach Zebedee, walked boldly over to the operator's corner and called for a telegraph blank.

The young man looked up and seemed to smile.

A boy sending a dispatch from Sandycroft at that time of night was something startling enough to be remembered in after years.

"Well, sir, what is it, you say?" he said.

"I want a blank. Want to send a telegram, you see?"

"You do? Did you come on the train?"

"Wot if I did, or wot if I dropped down from Venus?" cried Hornets. "Do you chate-cise every man who wants a blank in this place? Seems to me you have a queer way, then."

"You're a trump, you are. Where do you want to send it to?"

"Mebbe to Halifax and perhaps to Jerusalem," said Hornets as he drew the form toward him and began to write deliberately.

His fingers were rather nimble and in a short time he had written the following on the form:

"SANDYCROFT, N. J.

"April 24th, '91.

"TO ZACH ZEBEDEE.

"No. — Broadway:—

"Frogs coming. Have secured Java, and Algiers. Frogs en-route to your office for box. "DICKERY."

The operator read this somewhat confused jumble and looked at Hornets in blank astonishment.

"Do you really want this sent?" he asked.

"If I didn't do you think I would have gone to the trouble of writin' it?" demanded the enraged Hornets. "I want it to beat that train to New York, but it don't seem to be doing it just now."

The young man took the message and seated himself at his ticker.

"Paid for at the other end of the line, eh?" he said.

"Paid for at both ends if you insist upon it," was the reply.

Hornets stood by till the message had been dispatched when he turned to go.

"Isn't it rather early for frogs in the marshes?" queried the operator.

"Not when you know how to catch 'em," was the rejoinder and away went the boy pleased with what he had done.

"She'll find some one at home when she calls for the box," he chuckled. "She will find Captain Zach ready to take her in and she will run against a snag despite her oath to that old wretch who sends her off on this mission. I have found Prince Peter alive and kicking just as I thought I would. What's a hand to him? That was the coolest trick I ever heard of—shooting a dead man in a depot where there was a lot of wounded people, and then cutting off the man's hand to make Zach believe that he had spoiled his own face with the revolver. I wonder what Mother Does is doing just now and whether she found 1003 Fuglehorn street? Hornets, you'll have to apologize to the old woman one of these days; but you'll do it like a man if everything comes as Captain Zach wants it to."

He went back finding his way along the road which led to the hidden house, and at last reached the gate.

Something was heard coming toward him and he drew back among the trees.

That something passed him and vanished toward the town.

What should he do? Should he go back and play spy again, or would it be best to retire to his nest in the barn and rest on the laurels won that night?

Hornets debated but a moment and turned back after the dark specter.

He followed it to the road when the stars showed it to him in their faint light. It was the figure of a man and it moved toward the station.

He saw it to the edge of the platform; he noticed that the man walked into the depot, and, at the risk of being discovered, he went to the door.

Then he saw the face of the person he had followed; then he looked upon the white features as they stood revealed, and the next moment he saw Prince Peter bending over the little board, on which he had written the cipher telegram to Broadway Zach, the detective.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLACK-HANDLED DAGGER.

WHILE these events were transpiring at the Jersey end of the trail, others closely connected with Broadway Zach's man-hunt were taking place in New York.

Left to himself after Hornet's departure, the ferret resolved to follow the trail of the blue viol, which had fallen into his hands through Doctor Kirby.

There was no doubt that some of its contents had taken the life of Denia Totten, and after what Rosa, the maid, had told him about the events of that fatal night, he was not inclined to give up the girl nor her knowledge.

His last interview with Captain Kidlace, who had changed his confession so startlingly that he had admitted entering the house after bidding the murdered woman good-night, was still uppermost in his mind, and while waiting for a report or a telegram from Hornets, he played a hand which came near ending the whole game so far as the detective was concerned.

The very night of Hornet's discoveries in Jersey, Zach Zebedee entered a rather quiet street and made his way to a house which stood a few feet from the sidewalk, and was partially shaded during the day by several trees.

He knew that that very day Rosa had abandoned the house of the tragedy, saying that she did not care to inhabit it any longer, owing to what had happened there, and the detective had tracked the girl to the building which he was approaching.

He was so disguised that he was quite sure that the girl's eyes, keen as they were, could not penetrate his mask, and when he had knocked, he again congratulated himself on the situation.

The door was opened by a little boy, who looked at him with a curious smile, and at last held the door open for him to enter.

Zach walked in, guided by the boy, and was ushered into a parlor alongside the hall.

The apartment which he entered was small and dark.

As he took a seat he heard the sound of voices, and the boy seemed to be telling some one of the gentleman whom he had admitted.

In another minute the door swung open and a woman came in.

It was Rosa!

Captain Zach looked at her as she came forward, and saw that she was agitated and pale.

"I have called to see the lady of the house," said the shadow.

"I am the lady of the house," was the reply.

"I live here."

"But you—"

"I have moved lately, and intend to live here. I am Miss Ferris—Miss Rosa Ferris—you may have seen my name in the newspapers recently," and the maid smiled as she seemed to recall the murder and the events that had followed it.

She was very frank with him and as he looked into her eyes he wondered if she suspected that he was the tireless detective on the trail.

At this moment the boy came to the door which Rosa had left ajar and called her out into the hall.

"That is bad," Zach heard the girl say. "I don't want both of them here at the same time. I shall tell him that—no, I will let him in and take him to the other room where he can wait till the man in the parlor has gone."

Rosa moved toward the front door which she opened and there came in the sound of other feet.

Zach listening with all ears started a little when he recognized one of the low voices in the corridor.

Captain Kidlace was there.

He heard Rosa escort him to the room almost opposite the parlor and the next moment she came back, calm and composed.

Something had brought the handsome captain to the girl's abode and this showed that she had kept him posted as to her movements.

Rosa came toward him and took a chair.

"I believe you said you wanted to see the lady of the house and on that score I have already answered you."

"I have seen your name in the newspapers. They gave you some notoriety, that's a fact, miss. I trust you are out of the mess now for it was a most unpleasant one."

"It was indeed, to have the whole city reading about you, and to be quizzed by a lot of police and detectives! Not a very pleasant experience, I assure you, but I trust with you that the worst is over and that I shall have peace and rest from now on."

Zach settled back in his chair while he watched the girl.

As yet she did not seem suspicious, but all at once as it were she started and then rose to her feet.

Her hand rested on the edge of the table as she said:

"I see that I am not out of the woods yet. You have come hither to question me about those terrible events. I can see that now. Why did Johnny let you in?"

The shadow could not repress a smile at these words but the girl did not join in.

She was white, calm and serious.

"I have made up my mind to one thing and that is to tell nothing more," said she. "I intend to keep a silent tongue in my head for I don't care about any further notoriety; and, then, I have friends whom the detectives are trying to inveigle into the snare, and I shall not compromise them in any way."

It was a good time for him to throw off the mask of secrecy, but Zach hesitated.

Evidently Rosa did not know him, though she more than half suspected that he was a detective, and he was about to go on with the intention of trying to undeceive the girl for a purpose, when the door leading into the hall opened and Captain Kidlace stood before them.

He had come in without being announced and now he looked first at Zach and then at the girl who seemed to be put out by his appearance.

"Don't you know that man, girl?" he demanded.

"I do not. In fact, he has not given his name, but he said he came to see the lady of the house—"

"It's trick of his. You have seen him before from what I already know and—"

Rosa seemed to lean toward Broadway Zach and all at once she uttered an exclamation of recognition.

"I see you now, Mr. Zebedee!"

"You are right," cried Captain Kidlace, striding forward and placing his body between Zach and the door in a menacing manner. "This man is determined with your assistance girl to stretch my neck and you seem to be giving him all the aid in your power."

"Heavens! what is that you say?" cried Rosa. "I aiding him? No, no! I would see him go to the gallows. I would send him there to save you, Kyrle."

"By Jupiter! it doesn't look that way from what you have done," was the reply.

The girl advanced toward him; but he pushed her off.

"Look, then," she suddenly exclaimed. "We have this spotter in our power. He is shut in in this house and no one knows that he is here. If he is trying to draw a noose about your neck I will help you make way with the man now, and to-morrow there need be no trail for him to follow."

Zach saw the blazing eyes of the girl and looked from them into the cool face of Captain Kidlace.

The dandy sport said nothing.

"Stand by the door and don't let him get out," cried Rosa. "I am more than a girl when my friends are in danger."

"You gave him the paper which you say you found on the table after your mistress's death. You say, too, that you put a scrawl in its place—"

"I did, I did!"

"Don't you realize what you have done? You have placed in that man's hands a circumstantial noose strong enough to hang the most innocent! You have deliberately put my neck in the halter and yet you say that you will stand by your friends."

Rosa seemed to recoil and her gaze was fastened upon Captain Kidlace who had ended his sentences in the most derisive tones.

"I will atone for the break," she exclaimed.

"I will atone by killing the man-hunter. That is the best way out of the muddle, Kyrle."

Zach Zebedee with his mind made up heard these words and kept his ground.

He did not intend to be killed in that house, not at least by a lioness like the maid.

He stepped forward, walking straight toward the door which stood ajar behind Captain Kidlace when all at once with a stifled cry Rosa flew at him with the spring of a tigress.

Zach threw out his hands and caught the girl, but she wrenched from his grasp and held aloft the black-handled dagger which she had drawn.

Captain Kidlace with calmly folded arms looked on, a smile lurking on his face and his eyes full and bright.

Rosa was strong and nearly the detective's match.

As she retreated toward the wall, flushed to the temples, she looked at her lover and then dropped the knife a moment.

"You stand there like a statue," she said to him. "Wait! I will shut the door. There! That man need not escape us, for if he does, knowing what he knows or what he thinks he knows, he may prepare one of his death snares for you."

Even this did not move the man.

"You seem to care not," continued the girl.

"I care not for the proof which he thinks he holds against me. He says he knows that I did not kill Denia Totten—"

"He says that, yet he hunts you down."

"Perhaps he knows his business. These detectives ought to, but it makes it unpleasant for me."

Rosa said nothing.

"I came hither to see you," continued Captain Kidlace, addressing the girl. "You found that writing on the table, yet you did not burn it."

"I did not."

"You gave it to the very man who would be apt to use it against me."

"I did."

"Girl, were you trying to murder Captain Kidlace?"

For a moment she confronted him and then seemed to reel from the spot where she stood.

The dagger which she had drawn against the detective she let fall to the floor, and as her face whitened she fell backward to be caught ere she could reach the floor by the hands of the captain.

"What do you think now?" he asked, looking at Zach. "Does this acting pay you for coming hither? The girl has passion and vengeance so mixed up in her nature that she is an anomaly. What do you think?"

Zach went forward and stopped where he could look down into the face of Rosa.

"I know what you would have me believe," said he. "I see what you are driving at; but it is false."

Captain Kidlace laughed.

"Time will prove it," said he, releasing the girl when he had taken her to a chair. "She has fled from the scene of the crime. She has taken this house for a hiding place—"

"But she hasn't changed her name."

"That may be."

"Don't you think that would have been the first thing if she had been guilty?"

"I don't know. These women are curious creatures. You never know how to take them. She hid the paper which she says she found in the room of death; but instead of burning it, she readily gave it up to you—you, the very man who never should have seen it at all."

Captain Kidlace walked across the room and to the door on the side of the hallway.

"You and the girl yonder may weave any net you please. I am out of it. I once thought

a good deal of the Venus there, despite her humble origin, but now I am against both of you. You may track the guilty down, but you must not shadow me. I won't stand it! I will sweep from my path the man who tracks me; and as for the girl yonder I will strangle her if she tries to push me toward the gallows under pretense of saving my life."

Captain Kidlace walked into the hall and the detective followed; but the front door opened and shut and the man in gloves was gone.

"I'll go back and comfort Rosa," said Zach with a smile.

CHAPTER XIX

FUZILIE ACCOMPLISHES HER MISSION.

MEANTIME Fuzilie, the Algerine, was on her way back to New York from Sandycroft.

She had parted from Prince Peter in the house behind the trees, and the last words of old Fezzam still rung in her ears.

If she found the lost box—the box which Rosa had given up to the Prince in the house of death and mystery—if she found it and delivered it to him, she would pass from under the shadow of the Black Cord and could go back to Prince Peter.

These thoughts nerved the dark-eyed girl to an amazing extent while the train bore her through the night toward the river.

More than once she pressed her flushed face against the window and tried to make out the lay of the land through which they were rushing; but the night was too dark for this, and she was compelled to settle back in her seat seeing nothing.

Fuzilie knew nothing of the trick Hornets had played on Mother Doss.

She did not know that the old woman, Prince Peter's mother, had been allowed to ride on to a city where she would find herself among strangers; and if she had known this she might have smiled at the boy's cleverness.

The train pulled into the Jersey depot at last, and Fuzilie, watching on every side, alighted and walked to the boat.

She had resolved to lose no time.

The sooner she found the box the sooner would they be free from the rule of the Black Cord, and she had made up her mind to make the play that very night, so that at ere day she would be on the back trail to Prince Peter, with the release in her possession.

No one seemed to see the fair girl as she rode across the river and stepped from the boat.

She knew where to find both Dr. Kirby's office and the detective's den.

For a moment she hesitated as she recalled some of Prince Peter's narrative.

If he had failed to find the box on the doctor's person when he choked him in the alley, then she would be likely to find it in the detective's possession, and with this idea uppermost in her mind she proceeded on her mission.

It was past midnight when the Algerine girl reached the vicinity of Zach Zebedee's den.

She looked up at the building which held so many offices and wondered if the man-hunter was at home.

Perhaps he was out on the trail; perhaps at that very hour he was recording some triumph—picking up some link in the chain of crime which he was forging against the guilty.

Fuzilie walked into the open hallway at the sidewalk.

The shadows there swallowed her up.

The staircase that rose before her told her that somewhere above her lay triumph or defeat, and as she went up the dark steps she laid her hand on something which gave her eyes a brighter gleam and sent her blood hotter than before through her veins.

Possessed of the subtle qualities of her race, Fuzilie, guided by intense desire, ascended the stairway and reached the floor which contained the detective's room.

She expected to find the door locked, but Prince Peter had placed in her hand the last thing ere quitting him a little bunch of keys, such as fit the general run of office doors, and she drew them forth taking care to suppress their jingle.

The corridor was dimly lit by a jet that burned at the further end.

It sent its light almost to the detective's door and Fuzilie stopped in the shadows.

Not a sound came from anywhere to break the strange silence of the scene.

The girl laid her hand on the knob and started when the door opened.

This was more than she had looked for; she was to get into the ferret's room without trying the efficacy of Prince Peter's keys.

Fuzilie found the room beyond rather deserted and cheerless.

A curtain stretched across one side of it told her that beyond it might be found a couch and perhaps the sleeping figure of the ferret himself.

But she was not sure of this.

The bluish flame of the jet burning over the table near the middle of the room showed the girl what to do and where she was, and she went forward with renewed confidence.

The unlocked door told her suddenly that the detective had gone out, that he was liable to return at any moment, and that she must make a lightning search if she did not want to encounter him in his own den.

Nerved to the utmost, Fuzilie went to work.

She opened the drawers of the table or those which she found not to be locked and her keen eyes and hands went through them all.

She looked every place where a little box might be hidden and in a short time she had looked in every corner, but the one concealed by the curtain.

Of course the girl knew nothing of the cipher telegram which Hornets had sent from the little office at Sandycroft.

If she had she would not have entered that house; she would have remained from the detective's den, or gone back to Jersey to find and strangle with her soft dark hands the keen-witted boy-spy.

At last she advanced toward the curtain.

Every other part of the room had been searched.

As she laid her hand on the curtain intending to draw it aside she seemed to hesitate.

Something more than the little box with its deadly contents might be beyond.

Something which was against her and the fortunes of Prince Peter might lurk like a tiger behind the cloth.

But Fuzilie had come to find and she would not be balked by any fears that might intrude.

Her hand parted the curtain and she stepped forward, letting the folds hang apart so as to let the light in upon that part of the den.

She saw a couch and then a stretch of wall; then she caught sight of a table against the latter and a wooden box upon it.

The Algerine pushed forward rapidly.

She seemed to think that the prize was within her reach.

All she had to do was to put forth her hand and take the box, after that to creep from the place fly to the ferry and go back to Prince Peter and old Fezzam.

But Fuzilie was mistaken.

She gained the table and laid her hand on the box. She drew it toward her and tried to open it.

At that moment she felt that she was seen by some one.

Something told the Algerine that she was watched by a pair of eyes as keen as her own.

She turned to the left and seemed to grow instantly into a statue of stone.

In the light as it fell against the heavy folds of the curtain stood a figure which secured her breathless attention.

A man was there!

Fuzilie laid her hand on the hilt of her dagger, but she did not draw it.

Instead, her fingers slipped from the hilt and she remained gazing at the apparition as it stood there, and eyes that seemed to burn their way into her body watched her unceasingly.

This strange and startling confrontation did not last more than two seconds.

Fuzilie started forward and turned into the full light, but at the same time a hand touched her and she was a prisoner.

"I've been waiting for you," said Zach Zebedee as he came on. "I timed your coming fairly well and thought I would surprise you."

Waiting for her? What did he mean?

No wonder the Algerine looked at the detective in blank amazement. It could not be that her coming had reached him before she arrived; no, that could not be, yet he assured her that he knew of her journey.

She did not know how to answer him, therefore she stood still and let him go on.

"Take a chair," said Zach, leading her unresisting to a chair at the table. "You have waited from the ferry, as I see by the mud on your shoes. Didn't you care to trust the cab-boy?"

No reply.

"I'm glad you've come, girl. I have been looking for you."

She could have guessed that.

She knew that Zach Zebedee would like to have found her sooner, but her shrewdness had prevented, yet now she was in his net and he had spread it deftly over her head.

"You have come for the box. Let me show it to you, girl, and you shall tell me if it is the one you wanted."

She could not suppress a quick start.

Zach unlocked a drawer behind the curtain and came forward with something in his hand.

As he placed the box on the table she smiled for she saw that it was the very one for which she had been sent, but the next moment her eyes wandered to the detective in a mute appeal which he did not understand.

"Is that the one, Fuzilie?" he asked.

"That is the one."

"You see it opens and that it has some Arabic characters on the sides as well as on the inside of the lid. You can read Arabic, can't you?"

Her look was a confession that she could read it. In fact, it was her native tongue, the one she had used in more than one country, and as she looked at the box she reached out her hand

as if to pull it toward her, but the detective gently kept it back.

"See, here is a little blue vial in the bottom of the box," said Zach. "It seems to contain a liquid almost colorless. Do you know what it is?"

"I do not."

"Who sent you from Jersey for the box, Fuzilie?"

No, she could not tell him that for that would be betraying Prince Peter.

"Do they want it very badly? Must you take it back to them?"

"I must! Oh, you don't know what is at stake!" she suddenly cried, clasping her hands. "You don't know what I can do for one whom I love by taking back the box and its contents."

"You mean Prince Peter, Fuzilie?"

She recoiled from the detective like one suddenly confronted by a serpent.

"I don't know," she said confusedly.

"You mean that you will not tell me that he escaped with the loss of a hand—that you have just come from his hiding place, that Fezzam of the Black Cord is there, too, and that he, not Prince Peter, sent you after the box?"

The Algerine rose and faced the detective.

"I tell on no one. You can keep the box. I can go out and keep my secrets."

Zach sprang up and reached out for her, but quick as a flash something glittered in the light and the girl with one desperate effort made a pass at him and the needle-like point of the poniard seemed to touch his face.

He seized her wrists and held her first at arms' length and then suddenly drew her toward him to say:

"You shall tell me all you know, Fuzilie. You know all I want to learn, and when you say that you know nothing about the contents of the box, you do not tell the truth."

She got a fiercer look as she tried to break from his grip; she overturned a chair as she struggled, and all at once, with a display of strength which Zach did not believe she possessed she pushed him against the table, throwing it over and broke his hold to save himself.

Zach Zebedee went to the floor and fell toward the curtain—fell headlong upon his couch, but in a moment he recovered and turned to renew the struggle with his dark-eyed adversary, turned just a second too late, for the door shut with a bang and Fuzilie and the silver box were missing!

CHAPTER XX.

THE FLIGHT OF A BOX.

WITH the fleetness of a gazelle Fuzilie, the Algerine, went down the steps and out into the night.

She did not pause to look back after reaching the sidewalk, but sped on and on as if she could hear the feet of the tracker in swift pursuit.

She had secured the prize after all.

At the last moment, when she was on the eve of giving up the work, she had beaten the detective, had baffled the man-hunter of the metropolis, and the object which she had concealed in her bosom was the salvation of herself and Prince Peter.

Fuzilie, as she fled along the street keeping in the shadows as much as possible, began to map out a plan for the immediate future.

Whither should she fly?

Would not Zach Zebedee watch the ferries, for he knew that she had come from Sandycroft just to baffle him, and it would be natural for him to think that she would go back with her treasure?

She would not go to the ferry. She need not go back to Sandycroft; she would not go back until she had first sent Prince Peter word that the detective knew that he had deceived him, and that his hiding-place had been discovered.

Belonging to the Black Cord even while she was Mrs. Fotten's maid, Fuzilie had improved her outings, and had learned a good deal of the city.

She knew where old Fezzam's den was, where Mother Doss held forth, and where there were other places which might hide her for a time from the keen eyes of the man of many trails.

"Why not go to Fezzam's den?" thought she as she flew over the stones. "He knows that the old man is in Jersey waiting for me, and he won't look for me there."

The maid turned her feet in the direction of the Algerine's place and crept down the alley and into the house.

Not until she had locked the door behind her did Fuzilie breathe free again.

The place was cold and dark, and she dared not strike a light.

Little Zulef, the Magic Child, was not to be found, and this rather pleased Fuzilie.

She passed into Fezzam's room and sat down.

The box was still hers. She had taken it from the detective, but not without a hot struggle.

All she had to do now was to wait awhile, and then get the box to Fezzam, after which her mission would be accomplished, and she and Prince Peter would not be under the Black Cord any more.

Morning came, but Fuzilie, hungry and cold, did not lift the curtain nor stir from the place.

Her heart beat against the box, and she felt it with her hand, to make safety doubly sure.

Yes, it was there, and whenever she felt it her thoughts went out to Prince Peter and she smiled to think of the triumph she had won.

During the long night she had not thought once of the dagger she had drawn on Zach Zebedee.

She did not think of it until after a long shaft of daylight had stolen across the floor, and then she saw at her feet an empty sheath.

With a sharp cry Fuzilie stooped and picked it up.

"Where—where is the blade?" she cried, and then she began to search her person, but to find nothing of value upon it save the accursed box for which she had risked life and liberty.

She went back to the chair, frightened.

What if she had dropped the knife at the door of the old house!

If she had it would betray her if found.

Perhaps she had left it in the detective's den and then the fear need not be so great.

Somewhere she had lost it and it was like losing a friend to Fuzilie for it was a Moorish dagger, the hilt of which was as sharp as a needle and as keen.

She looked the house over for it, but she dared not open the door and search the alley.

She was almost sure that it lay outside and that just as she stooped to pick it up some one would see her—perhaps Zach Zebedee himself.

At last Fuzilie bethought herself of a stratagem and proceeded to put it in force.

She recalled a little window above the door which she had entered.

She slipped up-stairs and found herself in a little room hardly large enough for a single cot.

It had a cold, musty smell, and was dark and cheerless.

The window had a shutter which she had never seen open during the many visits she had made to Fezzam's den and now it was closed as ever.

The girl pressed her face against the shutter and looked into the alley.

The light was enough to let her see the stones there and the man who came down staggering from house to house as if the alley wasn't wide enough for his drunk.

As he swaggered toward the Fuzilie door uttered a cry, not at the man's condition, but at something she saw just then.

On the stones lay the dagger she had dropped!

The early light shone on the blade and she saw the black handle with its curious carvings, a shiek's head for the crown-piece.

The sight stunned Fuzilie for a moment.

The knife would betray her.

If found by the detective he would know where to look for her.

As Fuzilie looked the man with a jag on tried to steady himself, but he had too much to take care of, and the next moment he fell headlong, covering the dagger with his body and hiding it from view.

At first the girl uttered an exclamation of joy for the blade could not be seen now, but she thought that when the drunkard was found it would stand revealed and then the trouble might come.

Why not go down and take the knife from under the man?

As yet no one was in sight, and she was the only person who had seen the man fall.

She ran from the dark room and reached the front door.

There she listened with her hand on the knob, but heard no one.

She opened the door gently and looked out.

The drunkard was still lying where he had fallen.

Fuzilie stepped cautiously out and went toward him. She looked up and down the alley as she did so and then, slipping her hand underneath the man, secured the blade and secreted it in her bosom.

It was a lucky adventure. She was armed again, and, moreover, had secured the secret of her hiding-place.

In another instant she was bounding toward the door left ajar. As she vanished she heard a loud voice and then a hasty footstep.

But Fuzilie did not look back, only shut the door, sprung the bolt, and turned with the black hilt in her hand.

"The man who enters that door falls dead!" she cried.

The three seconds that succeeded were momentous ones.

Fuzilie heard the tones of a drunken man and then those of one who was sober.

"I guess you're not hurt," said the latter. "I thought she had killed you, as she appeared to have a knife in her hands. Did she rob you?"

There was a muttered reply, and then came the words: "We shall see," and steps toward the house.

The crisis had come.

As a hand struck the door Fuzilie's grip seemed to tighten on the ebony hilt and her figure straightened.

"Never! You get in by force if at all," she said. "I will open that door to no man."

For some time after the knocking she heard no noise and at last the footsteps receded.

Once more she crept up the steps and into the dark room over the entrance.

The drunkard was gone and so was the other one.

"It was a narrow escape. Prince Peter will shudder when I tell him about it, and Fezzam—that old demon will show his teeth like a pleased hyena!"

Possessed of both box and dagger, the dark-eyed beauty felt doubly armed and forgot her situation and her hunger.

She crept down the stairs again and stopped in the room where Fezzam had played with his dupes.

All at once the back door opened with a creak and Fuzilie started with the dagger in her hand.

"Murder! child, where did you come from?" she cried as she bounded forward and lifted the little visitor from the floor.

Zulef drew back and looked wonderingly into the Algerine's face.

"I did not know you were here. I got tired of staying where he took me and thought I would come back to the old place awhile."

"Who took you off?" asked Fuzilie.

"The man who hunts men."

"The detective—the man-sharp who wants all of us?"

"Does he want you?"

Fuzilie shuddered, but did not answer.

"Can you 'see' for me?"

"I—I don't know. You are the person who used to come to see Fezzam."

"I've been here before, child."

"Ah, you see I haven't forgotten you. I don't forget anybody. I have seen a great many people, but I know them all. Do you know where Fezzam is?"

Fuzilie shook her head.

"Come, I want to know something and you will 'see' for me, won't you?"

"I will try. Why don't you throw up the curtain and let this old room have more light?"

"No, no. It has all the light we need," cried Fuzilie. "Now, shall I place you in the chair, or would you sooner rest in my arms while you 'see' for me?"

"I will take the chair, for it is a long way hither and I am tired."

So the Algerine placed the wonderful child in the chair and took her hand.

"You don't know how to do it like Fezzam does, but I will help you," said Zulef. "There! I feel the spell coming on, and when I have shut my eyes you must ask me what I see, keeping your mind on what you want to know, you know."

"Yes, yes," and Fuzilie waited breathlessly for the opportune moment.

She watched the child by placing her face close to hers and when she thought she was in the hypnotic condition she asked her:

"Do you see a smooth-faced man who lives in a little room with a curtain running across one side of it?"

Zulef remained silent for half a minute though her lips tried to move and then she spoke:

"I do see such a man."

"Where is he?"

"In the little room."

"What is he doing?"

"He is opening a letter which a boy has just brought in."

"Is it a dispatch, Zulef?"

"I don't know. The boy who has just gone out wore a blue uniform."

"A telegram! Can you see what it says?"

"Not until he opens it; then I may stand on the back of his chair and look over his shoulders."

"Do so. Stand on the back of his chair and read the message with him."

"I am there now. He has taken the telegram out of the envelope. He is reading it and so am I."

Fuzilie's breath came in gasps. She nearly touched the child's face as she leaned toward her.

"Why don't you go on?" she cried. "You must read what it says, child. Where is it from, and what does it say?"

"It is from 'Sandycroft.' What a strange name that is! I wonder where it is?"

"Go on. I know where it is and will tell you. But the message? What does it say?"

"There are but four words: 'Prince Peter is dead!'"

"Dead!" cried Fuzilie as she sprang up. "Woe to the wretch who killed him!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A LEAF FROM A LIFE.

THE Algerine shook Zulef so suddenly that she came out of the trance with a slight scream.

"Did the telegram say that?" she cried. "Was it true and from Sandycroft?"

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished child.

"You know what you saw?"

"I don't. When I am out of the spell I don't know what I saw."

Fuzilie for a moment breathed freer, but then

the old fear overcame her and she turned pale again.

"Do you want to stay here with me?"

"No, I am willing to go back."

"To the man-hunter's?"

"Yes."

That would not do if she (Fuzilie) intended to hide longer in that old house. But now she was seized with a desire to go back to Sandy-croft.

If Prince Peter was dead some one should suffer for it for she did not hesitate to accuse Fezzam of having killed him.

Zulef struggled from her arms, and before she knew it had darted across the room and gained the door. The child pulled it open and dodged out, and when the Algerine reached the portal the little one was out of sight.

"It is all over now," said Fuzilie to herself as she went back. "The child will betray me. I can't stay here in safety. I must go."

But she waited. Higher and higher crept the sun, and still Fuzilie lacked the courage to quit the den.

Something seemed to lie in wait for her beyond the door. A hand which she dreaded seemed to lurk for her among the shadows of the alley, and so she remained.

It was true that Zach Zebedee had received the telegram which little Zulef had so marvelously seen while in the trance. He had read and re-read the four words which had been sent by Hornets from the Jersey end of the trail and yet he had not acted.

Prince Peter dead at last.

It was the second death for him in the eyes of some people. The episode of the collision had not passed from all minds, and the detective recalled it with much vividness as he held the telegram in his hand and looked again at its brief contents.

Hornets had not particularized. He had not sent any particulars, and Zach was left to guess how Prince Peter had passed out of the world.

The detective left the little rooms on Broadway and passed down upon the street.

The early dawn was cool and indicative of a busy day in the history of the great thoroughfare.

New York was already astir.

As he lifted his eyes and looked down the street he caught sight of a figure that appeared familiar.

Quickening his steps he neared it and had his suspicions confirmed for it was Captain Kidlace.

The dandy with the gloves was out very early for his health or he must have been watching the office on Broadway.

Zach watched the man for some time and saw him cross into Wall street.

"A short cut, perhaps," said the ferret to himself as he pushed after the captain.

It was not a long walk, for Captain Kidlace was soon run down and when he had been seen to enter a small restaurant he had the tireless man at his heels.

His last interview with the captain in Rose's new retreat had not passed from the detective's mind, and he waited till the man in gloves had satisfied his morning desires, when he came out upon the side-walk.

Zach brushed against Captain Kidlace and that worthy turned and looked at him keenly.

"I told you, sir—"

"Don't repeat it, I beg of you, captain," said Zach with a smile. "I want to see you. I have a bit of news."

"For me?"

"Yes."

They walked along together and Zach, watching the captain's countenance, said:

"Prince Peter is dead."

There was a slight start.

"When?" sentimentally queried the captain.

"Last night."

"Where?"

"Over in Jersey."

"Dead from the hurt?"

"Perhaps."

"Ah, you are not sure of that?"

"I am not."

"Neither am I," and a singular look came into Captain Kidlace's eyes. "Are you going to see?"

"I can't say. Won't you go back with me, captain?"

"To your rooms?"

"Yes."

Captain Kidlace looked amazed one moment and then the audacity of the request seemed to amuse him.

"After what passed between us when we met last?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly."

"By Jupiter! I'll go with you," Kidlace said. "But mind you, Zach Zebedee, this doesn't make me take back one threat, nor break one word of my promise."

"Of course not," and they went back to Broadway and Zach led the way to his room.

"I have brought you here for a purpose, captain," he said when they were seated. "I want to know something about the missing chapter of the dead man's life."

"What if you have come to the wrong well for water?"

"But I have not."

"Well, what is it you want to know?"

"It is this. When was Prince Peter branded and for what?"

Captain Kidlace crossed his legs and seemed to wish he had a cigar.

He looked across the table into the cool, imperturbable face of the Broadway spotter and seemed to collect his thoughts.

"You know he was branded, then?"

"Yes."

"But there you stop. Is that the missing chapter in his life to you?"

"Perhaps."

"It's a queer story and one which may startle you just a little, shrewd as you are."

You may know that they don't brand their criminals in this free land; that is a custom which in carried out in other countries, notably in France when they send to the penal colonies or to the galleys. Prince Peter is branded the neatest of any man you ever saw, and while they were doing it I told them it would last.

"You were present, then?"

"Oh, yes. It was almost my duty to be present. It was fulfilling a promise to the person he robbed."

"Then his offense was robbery?"

"Diamonds and some papers."

"Were they recovered?"

"Never, sir. They were so well concealed that we never found one of them and it was believed that when he made his escape from prison that he went to the hiding-place and got them again. It was a clever theft, but I never believed that he was the sole one in it. No, sir, he had a master then as he has had ever since."

"Whom did he rob?"

A smile came over Captain Kidlace's face. He leant toward Broadway Zach and went on:

"Here is where you may be astonished. He robbed Denia Totten, the widow of the French officer whom I may have killed in Algiers."

For a moment there was silence, then Zach Zebedee said, as he looked straight at the captain:

"Didn't your testimony help to send Prince Peter to the bagn?"

The man seemed to recoil.

"What if it did?" he cried. "It was the truth and we didn't intend to let such an adroit rascal get away."

"Then, you were Mrs. Totten's friend even at that time?"

"I was. But I thought you wanted the hidden chapter in Prince Peter's life."

"Go on with it now."

"Well, he made his escape, I say. Prince Peter was as shrewd as the shrewdest. He didn't look it at the time, but he was no novice in crime. He may have had Fuzilie for a confidante at the time, for she was madam's maid then; but they didn't prove it. When it was known that prisoner No. 9,888 had escaped, the authorities were on the alert. They watched the port and every hole and corner of Paris. It was thought that he would come back, but so far as we know he didn't; but the other one returned."

"What other one?"

"The infernal head of the Black Cord."

"Old Fezzam?"

"Yes, the serpent of the sands—the old wretch who may be a thousand years old for aught I know to the contrary. He vanished when Prince Peter went to the bagn, and he came back the day after the escape was known in Paris."

"When did you see Prince Peter again?"

"Not for years and then in this city. Fezzam was here, too, and so was Fuzilie."

"And Mrs. Totten and yourself?"

"Oh, yes," smiled Captain Kidlace.

"In fact, you were all here. Of course Prince Peter wanted vengeance for the brand on his back, and he knew that Mrs. Totten was responsible for it."

"Well did he know that, for the words he uttered in presence of the judge who sentenced him told us that, in his mind, there was such a thing as a day of retribution."

"What did he say?"

"I can't recall every word; but what he said was enough," answered Captain Kidlace.

"Was Mrs. Totten present, too?"

"She was spared that scene which I never detailed to her in full; but she ever lived in fear of that man with the brand of the bagn on his back."

Captain Kidlace seemed to have reached the end of his string of information for he stood erect, dangling his hat in his hand.

"Since he is dead," he went on, looking down at the Broadway spotter, "his old mother will come into possession of those documents which he stole when he got the diamonds."

"What is their purport?"

"They were pages on which was detailed with minuteness two things—Denia Totten's past childhood and the secrets of the Black Cord."

"How do you know that they exist?"

"They must exist," said the captain. "There were no secrets between Prince Peter and Mother Doss. What one knew both knew."

"Do you think he would make her the guardian of such treasures as those?"

"I know that he would not intrust them to Fezzam. Then, why not to Mother Doss?"

An idea flashed across the detective's brain. He knew that Hornets had accompanied the old woman out of town. Had she taken her secrets with her or were the documents which might throw light upon the murder mystery of N—street somewhere in the hovel inhabited by the old woman?

"You needn't search the crib she lives in," cried Captain Kidlace, who seemed to read the detective's thoughts. "It has been searched and sounded again and again. Every inch of space has been sounded, every spot scrutinized; the old lady has been drugged and searched. Nothing has escaped the hunting eye."

"Was it your eye?" asked Zach.

"It was mine!" proudly cried the man in gloves.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FERRET'S REWARD.

WITH Captain Kidlace out of the room, Zach Zebedee resolved to make a journey to Mother Doss's house, and while he believed that it had been thoroughly searched, as the captain had said, he was not without hope that the present play might result in something.

True he had lost both Fuzilie and the silver box, two important clues in the mystery, but the other one seemed just as important, in fact, was the very thing he wanted, for he knew that if the Algerine girl went back to Fezzam, the keen eyes of Hornets on the watch in Jersey would not let the game escape, and so he turned toward Mother Doss's den soon after the captain's departure.

The chapter in Prince Peter's life interested the Broadway ferret very much.

When he found himself on the dark stairway leading to the little room occupied by Mother Doss who had been led from the city by a message from her son, Prince Peter, a message which the cute Hornets had translated to suit himself, he stopped and listened, for the old place was a human bee-hive and a man after the game he sought was apt to act with caution.

Hearing nothing, Zach proceeded on his way and reached the old woman's door which yielded to the keys he brought along.

He locked the portal behind him and went to work.

The room was dark and dingy, for Mother Doss, like many of her class, was not a model housekeeper, and the ferret experienced no little trouble in finding the places he wanted to search.

It was not long before he recalled Captain Kidlace's words, that he had searched the place before him for the documents supposed to be in the old woman's keeping.

A man like the captain would not be likely to leave a single stone unturned.

He had looked everywhere.

There was nothing he had not overturned, nothing he had not sounded, and after an hour's search the keen detective was on the point of giving up the hunt.

He was sounding the last space of wall when he heard a key turn in the lock, and drawing behind a dirty curtain which hid one-half of the room, he saw the door open and a figure slipped in.

"I'd like to hang the boy, drat him!" exclaimed a coarse voice which identified itself to the hidden man-hunter. "Here, he took me off on a wild goose chase and left me on the road, that is, he got off at some outlandish station in Jersey and left me to go on and land in a strange city at the dead of night."

Mother Doss had come back from Philadelphia.

The old woman had found her way back to the city and had thrown herself into a chair where she was berating Hornets for the trick he had played on her.

Broadway Zach could not keep back a smile while he listened.

"I didn't find Prince Peter, and I came no nearer him now than when I started," continued Mother Doss. "But thank Heaven, I am home again after spending a night in the station-house in my efforts to find the street which the boy said was written down on the paper he read to me. The police said there was no such street in the city and they ought to know."

She paused for a moment and then got up.

"Fortunately I didn't take anything along worth taking or the cops of the Quaker City, as they call it, might have robbed me. I went almost empty-handed, and the wonder is that I'm back alive. I wonder where that boy is? Did he fall off the train, or was it all a trick in somebody's interest? If I thought the latter I would show him a trick the next time he comes to see me, but maybe he'll keep his distance or plan another swoop on me and mine."

She crossed the floor as the detective could see by a slight rent in the curtain and he watched her as she paused in front of an old print that hung on the wall.

"I guess they're safe yet," said she, removing the picture and lifting her hand. "I will see for my own satisfaction, for if they're gone I

will believe that the boy was at the bottom of a conspiracy to entrap me and entice me from the city."

The concealed spring which Mother Doss touched opened a little door in the wall, and the next moment she had thrust in the tips of her fingers and found something.

It was a small flat package tied with a strong cord which gave evidence of age, and looking at it a moment she put it back and rebung the portrait.

Zach did not doubt that he had discovered the hiding-place of the very documents he had been looking for, and then he waited for Mother Doss to quit the place.

"I'll run down to Mrs. Toole's on the next floor and get a cup of coffee. The ride has made me hungry, and, then, I needn't tell her all that has happened. Some things it is not best to share with any one, and I'll just keep to myself my going off on that wild goose chase when I thought all the time that I was hastening to Prince Peter's side."

To Zach's delight she left the room, carefully locking the door behind her, and when he no longer heard her footsteps on the stairs he came out from behind the curtain and went over to the picture.

Although he had watched the old woman with a great deal of care it took him some time to find the button in the wall, but once pressed the door opened and he pulled out the package. Found at last!

That which had escaped the searching eyes and hands of Captain Kidlace he had discovered and with it deftly concealed on his person he flitted toward the street.

As he passed a door on the next landing he heard the voice of Mother Doss as she talked to her bosom friend, Mrs. Toole, but he did not pause to catch the trend of the narrative, but hurried on and gained the street.

Home once more with the familiar appointments of his little den confronting him, the ferret took the prize from his pocket and opened it.

In a moment he was immersed in its contents which startled him from the very first.

The pages, closely written, told two things—the story of the Black Cord and the tale of Mrs. Denia's life.

Both were absorbingly interesting to the man who read.

An hour passed away and he was still mastering the wonderful narratives.

He drank in with eagerness every point of the wild, almost incredible history, nor looked up until he had reached the bottom of the last page.

"I am armed now!" cried Zach Zebadee. "I know the *motif* and all the whys and wherefores of them under on N—street. I almost know the hand that did the deed, and time will prove that I have found the right clue."

He laid the documents on the table and crossed the room with a smile of undisguised victory on his face.

"I believe I could go straight to the mark and make no mistake," said he. "I will proceed slowly at first, in order to fasten the chain of guilt on the right party; but when the proper time comes I will swoop upon the guilty and end the whole play."

He took up the paper and looked toward the door.

Footsteps were on the outside and the knock that sounded on his ears took him to the portal.

He opened it to the sprightly little figure of Doctor Kirby.

There was a dark, troubled look on the police surgeon's face as he came in.

"I fear the mystery is deeper than ever now?" said Kirby, taking a chair. "The old man who seemed to be in the game has vanished, but you knew this, Zach?"

"Fezzam?"

"Old Fezzam, the Algerine, who had the marvelous child that saw strange things while in the trance. I have been to the old place, just come away, in fact, but it is deserted and I have found nothing but this."

As Doctor Kirby spoke he reached into one pocket and pulled out a button which he laid on the table.

"A button from the coat of one of his dupes, I guess. I suspect the old charlatan never swept his floors, hence the button which I picked up on the floor."

Zach took the find and examined it a moment in the light.

"Thanks," said he, looking up at the doctor.

"I am glad you went to Fezzam's den."

"Because I picked up that button, eh?"

"Yes."

"Do you recognize it?"

"I have seen buttons just like it. In fact, I saw them last night and here in this room."

"No."

"Fact, doctor. I had a little adventure here," and he proceeded to relate his somewhat exciting interview with Fuzilie.

"You don't tell me that the dark-faced girl got away with the box, do you?" cried Doctor Kirby.

"She outwitted me in the end, for I was not prepared for the tigerish spring which she exe-

cuted. Why, she came at me with the force of a tigress, and I was falling headlong toward the bed yonder before I could resist. The girl is marvelously strong for her size; but she has been to old Fezzam's since quitting this place; probably she has been in concealment there and may return."

"Then we will nab her and get the box back!"

"We will try, anyhow," said Zach. "But if she was sent after it by some one she would be more likely to return to that party with the prize."

"You are right. We shall not find her in the old house."

"Doctor, I want you to read something—something which fate has thrown into my hands. It seems to bear on the case we have in hand, but first let me show you a dispatch from my partner, Master Hornets."

Zach took out the telegram and laid it before the little doctor who adjusted his spectacles and took it up with eagerness.

"Dead again?" he cried, when he had read the four words which had produced somewhat of a shock upon the nerves of the cool ferret. "I don't like to believe that, for Prince Peter was a factor in this game; but if he is dead, why, two lips are sealed and we—"

"And we will have to look elsewhere for what he knew, eh, doctor?"

"Just so, Zach. I wonder if the old woman knew any of his secrets."

"She seems to have been guardian for the whole lot."

"How so?"

The ferret's hand vanished a moment and the documents which he had picked up in Mother Doss's room were laid on the table.

"What's all that?" cried the little doctor.

"Read and see."

Zach leaned back in his chair while Doctor Kirby took up the package at which he looked a moment and then uttered an exclamation of wonder.

"You've got the whole thing in your grip at last, Zach. I never saw anything like this."

"Go on, doctor."

"It beats the Jews. Who would have thought that Mrs. Totten was a woman of that description? And who would have dreamed that the Black Cord, organized in Algeria, has its ramifications all over the world? Headed by Fezzam in this country, it has played more than one hand of death, though this document was not written in America."

"No, in Paris, as you see, doctor."

"In Paris, the wickedest city in the world, they say. But, Zach, what are you going to do now?"

"Go straight to the target."

"But this paper affords no proof as to who really killed Denia Totten."

"I know that, but what would you infer from a careful reading of it?"

"This," and Doctor Kirby leaned across the table and lowered his voice. "She was killed by one of two persons."

"Yes, doctor."

"By one of two, I say. She was not strangled, for the poison which was dropped into the eye did the work. Which one of the two did it, Captain Zach?"

"I believe I have solved that question," answered the Broadway ferret. "Let the near future say if my solution is correct."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHY HORNETS SENT THE TELEGRAM.

LEAVING the Broadway detective at what he considers the opening door of a deep mystery, let us go back to the hidden house in Jersey and see what has transpired at that end of the trail.

The night dispatch which had startled Zach Zebadee the one of four words was sent by the tireless Hornets at his post of duty near Sandycroft.

The boy who had witnessed the departure of Fuzilie for New York in search of the box and the blue vial of deadly poison, resolved not to abandon his place, but to remain and see what else occurred, believing that, being forewarned, the ferret was able to take care of himself and frustrate the girl.

Therefore he kept his post, hiding in the barn attached to the place during the day and stealing forth only at night when he could cover his movements with the cloak of darkness.

It was the night that witnessed the sending of the telegram "Prince Peter is dead," and Hornets, stealing toward the house, saw a light in one of the rooms.

He had been at that window before, had seen through the rent in the curtain the meeting of Fuzilie and Prince Peter, as well as the sending away of the girl on the dangerous mission.

This time when he drew near the window, making his way cautiously over the ground, and when he had glued his ear to the shutter while he looked into the room, he saw Prince Peter sitting near the fire with his arm in the sling.

Presently the door opened, but the man in the chair did not turn his head for a moment.

When he looked up he beheld the tall figure of

Fezzam, who was watching him with the eye of an eagle.

The old man was robed in a long garment which reached to the floor, while his waist was belted with a cord dark in hue and suggestive.

For half a second the two men looked at one another, and then Fezzam came forward.

"Do you think she will find it?" asked Fezzam.

"She will try," was the reply.

"She knows what it is to fail. She must not fail unless she wants the cord at her own throat."

Prince Peter made a quick gesture of resentment, but the eyes above seemed to cowl him.

"What did you ever do with the documents?" asked Fezzam, as his foot reached the young man's chair.

"What documents?"

"The ones you took when you got the diamonds."

"Ho," laughed Prince Peter, "they are gone—gone with the papers I burned before I—"

His face grew white and his lips twitched.

"You have said this before," broke in Fezzam. "I have never believed that you spoke the whole truth. There wasn't ashes enough."

"But I burnt them. Do you think I would let such documents rest against us?"

"I don't know what you would do. You know what you wear on your back?"

Prince Peter started as if a serpent had stung him.

"Must you ever taunt me with my disgrace?" he exclaimed, moving in his chair till he faced the dark faced old wretch in whose eyes there was not a sign of pity.

"You know it is there, so a mere mention of it should be no taunt. I say I have had no proof that you destroyed the papers—nothing but your unsupported word."

"And isn't that something?"

"It is the word of an escaped prisoner of the house," was the reply.

"It is all I have. I have sworn that I burnt the papers. I have said this on my solemn oath."

"What is the oath of a wearer of the brand?"

Prince Peter fairly fumed.

He looked at the bandaged hand and then at the other one.

He seemed to curse the accident which had deprived him of the hand, and the collision which had reduced his strength, for now he wanted to resent the cutting language of the man at his side.

"What did you do with them?" asked Fezzam. "I am here to ask that for the last time."

"I have told you."

"The word of a branded man—a man with a number. What was it?—9,888?"

"If I were to swear again it would be the oath of the same man."

The long fingers of Fezzam fell upon Prince Peter's shoulder and the other hand vanished beneath the robe.

"You have not sworn by this yet," said Fezzam, drawing from his bosom a little cord which dangled from his dark-brown hands.

Prince Peter, looking at the cord a second, fell back and then looked up at the old man.

"This is the sacred emblem of the Black Cord. It is the cord itself," continued Fezzam. "Oaths taken upon it are the most sacred. You have never touched it and sworn."

It was true, he had not. During all his connection with the Black Cord he had never taken an oath on the sacred cord. He had avoided it with the greatest care, for he had heard what the violation of an oath or a false one so taken meant, and now he shrunk from the little thing as if it were the gleaming eyes of a cobra.

"Swear on the Black Cord!" cried Fezzam, as he bent lower. "Swear on it, Prince Peter, that you destroyed the papers which you stole from madame?"

Prince Peter sat like one rigid in the chair. His face had not a vestige of color.

He looked up into the face of the old Algerine and seemed to shudder.

"You are afraid to test the cord. You dare not swear by it that you really burnt the papers."

"I dare!" cried the young man in a fit of manifest indignation. "I am not afraid to swear to the truth. Where is your accursed cord, Fezzam?"

It was thrust forward till it hung before his eyes, and clutching it with one hand he glared at Fezzam and said:

"Touching the Black Cord, I swear!"

In another moment he had relinquished the cord and old Fezzam drew it back.

The oath had been taken and Prince Peter with his lips glued together took a long breath.

"Liar!" said the Algerine. "You have taken the oath of the liar and on the Black Cord."

"I?"

"You, 9,888!"

"But—"

"Stop! Listen to me! You never destroyed those papers, but you have concealed them. You have turned them over to some one for safe keeping. Zulef, the Magic Child, has seen

them for me, but her skill failed at the door of their hiding-place. We will find them after you have felt the cord."

Prince Peter would have started from the chair if the hand of Fezzam had not again fallen, this time heavily, upon his shoulder.

"You cannot escape! We are alone," said the old man who seemed to possess the strength of a giant. "You are in my hands for judgment and punishment. There is no escape from the Black Cord for the man who has sworn falsely with it in his hand."

Prince Peter read gloom in the gleaming eyes that looked down upon him.

Fate and fate of a startling kind awaited him, for he felt that Fezzam was a tiger now and that the blood of the man from Algeria had reached the boiling point.

One-handed, he was practically helpless in the power of the executioner of the dread Order.

The hand that lay on his shoulder might lay at any moment to his throat, and the dark cord which still dangled from the silken fingers had a look it had never had before.

Suddenly the eye of Fezzam glanced toward the door.

Prince Peter seemed to think that it was his time, for all at once he sprang up only to be met by both hands of the old man and pushed back into the chair.

"Your time has come!" cried Fezzam. "The door of the man who swore falsely on the sacred cord is at hand!"

Prince Peter threw up his one good hand and tried to resist the crime.

It was torn down again and the fingers of Fezzam turned down his collar.

In their eagerness they turned it so far down that Hornets, as the body of Prince Peter was turned in the chair, saw marks on the back between the shoulder-blades.

The sight that now met the boy spy's eyes was such as to stifle his voice and to hold him spellbound outside the window.

He could not move. Old Fezzam bore Prince Peter deeper into the arm-chair and one of his knees pressed against his breast.

The sling in which the wounded arm had been kept was torn loose and the member fell toward the floor while a cry of pain was wrenched from Prince Peter's heart.

"Tell me where they are?" hissed Fezzam. "Tell me where you have concealed the papers."

"You wouldn't spare me if I did," came back in low tones.

"Tell me and see. You do not know what the Cord will do."

"Tell you I will not. I will die first!"

"That is right, Prince Peter. Show your grit to the last!" cried the boy at the window.

In less than half a minute all seemed over and the half-paralyzed Hornets, the single witness, saw a limp body hanging over one side of the chair, while Fezzam with fiendish glee fell back and contemplated his work.

He secreted the black cord in his bosom and slipped from the room.

Hornets waited awhile for his return, but as he did not come back the boy ran down the tree-bordered pathway and thence to the depot at the end of the country road.

Once more he startled the night operator with whom he now seemed on familiar terms.

Then he wrote out the four-worded telegram which he sent over the lines to surprise Zach Zebedee in his den on Broadway.

"Who is Prince Peter?" asked the operator as he took the message.

"The dead man," answered the boy as he deposited the money on the board and vanished.

For a minute Hornets stood outside and looked toward the hidden house.

Should he go back, or ought he to take the first train to New York to rejoin Zach at that end of the line?

Prince Peter was dead and Fezzam, the yellow tiger, was victorious, though the secret had been well kept by the one-handed sport.

Something suddenly decided the boy, for he ran back toward the house behind the trees.

He saw a light beyond the window, but when he looked through the curtain the room was empty.

"I wonder what he did with the body?" thought Hornets.

Just then he heard the shrill whistle of the cars as they reached a cut in the roadway a mile and more down the road.

"I'll go back to Zach," cried he. "I will return to my partner and report."

The nimble legs of the boy Vidocq carried him swiftly over the ground, and he gained the platform as the train dashed up.

As he swung himself up the steps he caught sight of a figure that had entered the coach at the forward door.

He saw it for a moment in the light and then the train started.

"Going back are you, Fezzam? Well, Zach will take care of you," said Hornets. "I believe I'll stay and see what has become of Prince Peter."

At the risk of breaking a limb, the boy jump-

ed from the car and with a smile which he did not try to conceal, he watched the train as it bore Fezzam somewhere—probably back to the mysteries and sins of Gotham.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SHREWD OLD HAG.

WHAT had become of Fuzzie, the Algerine maid?

The button found in Fezzam's house by Doctor Kirby and brought to Broadway Zach, told the latter that the girl and the box had probably been in hiding in the den of magic; but he did not hope to find her there after the doctor's discovery.

It was the night after his success at Mother Doss's house, that he might have been discovered on his way through the maze of streets in that part of the city.

The detective was on a mission of his own, and he had resolved to follow the trail which the papers had opened up to him.

If the old woman should discover that she had been robbed of the precious documents, and that after her return to the city from Philadelphia, she might give him some trouble, and Zach had determined to nip this danger in the bud.

But few knew or suspected that Prince Peter was Mother Doss's son, although he had been seen to go up to her rooms very often, and the old woman never lacked for the good things of life.

Prince Peter so oily and she so dirty! The man so handsome, though somewhat of a dude, and the old woman uncleanly; this was the contrast, and those who saw both wondered what link connected them.

Zach made his way to the old woman's house, but so well disguised that when Mother Doss opened the door, she did not see beyond the mask the ferret wore.

Zach pretended that he was a man who hunted up lost heirs, as he believed that by doing so he could best get at the woman's past, and perhaps clear up a certain point or two in the game.

But he found a person worthy of his steel, for Mother Doss was as guarded as an arrested spy, and he made out nothing.

"I have no ancestry, as you call it, and don't want any," said Mother Doss, snappishly. "I don't know anything about the family beyond myself, and don't care to know where we came from. If you think you have struck an heir in this den, you'll discover that you have found instead a mare's nest, and I don't pity you."

"But you don't know what may be ahead. There are thousands of dollars laid up for lost heirs, and in the vaults of the Bank of England—"

"We never came from England! My people never crossed the water, and I never had any relative over there, save for a few years when my—"

Mother Doss was treading on dangerous ground, and she shut up like a clam.

"Very well," said Zach, "if you had no relatives over there, maybe you can tell me about another heir I'm looking for."

The old woman crossed the hands in her dirty lap, and looked at the detective.

"There was once a young man who was sent to a French prison for a crime which he is thought not to have committed."

The listening creature started.

"He escaped afterward and vanished, and, if he could be found to-day I might put him in possession of a good sum of money which belongs to him."

"I can tell you nothing about the young man. If he was sent up when he was not guilty and escaped I'm glad he got away, that's all."

Mother Doss was calm again.

Zach rose to go.

She watched him a moment and then said:

"Where is that money for the young man coming from?"

It was an entering wedge.

"From across the water, but I can get hold of it the moment I can establish his identity."

"How much is the sum?"

"Ten thousand pounds."

"And that is how much?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"It's a good deal."

"Enough to live on for a time," smiled Zach.

Mother Doss did not speak, and while she stood near the door watching the ferret she seemed to be making up her mind what to do.

She was avaricious, was this woman, who lived near the sky; she loved a penny with the passion of the miser, and somewhere about the premises were a good many which had fallen from Prince Peter's hand.

"Could the young man's mother get the money if she could prove that he was dead?"

"Yes," said he, going toward Mother Doss.

"If the young man's mother could prove that he is dead and establish her own identity she might get the money."

"Would you help her?"

"That I would."

"Don't go, then."

Zach went back and dropped into a chair and waited for the old woman to continue.

"I guess you're all right," said she. "I don't like to deal with everybody. I had a son once who was unfortunate enough to fall into bad hands across the water and he went to prison."

"Well?"

"He gave them the slip, too, for he was innocent of the crime and had resolved to get away at the first chance. You don't blame him, do you?"

"Of course not. What was he charged with?"

"Robbery. Robbery and attempted murder, but he would never have got into trouble if he had not been drawn into a net which was worked by an old man. I know it all for my boy made a straight story of it after his escape. He never told me a lie, no matter what he may have done to others. Your story fits my boy to a 'T,' but I can't for the life of me see who would be leaving him fifty thousand dollars."

"I will explain by and by, but if you are the mother of such a son you must produce proofs of his death."

Mother Doss opened a drawer and dragged in the light some copies of a newspaper which she spread out on the dirty table.

"Here they are and I will have to let out a secret which has never been so much as suspected."

Zach leaned forward and followed the finger that moved over the page.

"It was in this wreck. Here you read about a young man who was arrested by an officer on the train just before the collision; how they, the officer and the other, were fastened together at the wrists; how when the collision came they were thrown apart and how the hand of one was torn off. After that—here it is, see it!—the wounded man was carried into a shed of a depot where in a moment of insanity he shot himself to death. It's all there better than I can tell it. It is a terrible story for a poor woman to relate, especially when the subject of it is her own son."

Mother Doss drew her rough hand across her eyes, and then remained silent a minute.

"Was that your son?"

"Yes, the boy who went to French prison, and no doubt the very one whom you are looking up. I'm his mother."

"And his name was—"

"Peter. They called him 'Prince Peter' all over the city, and though he came to see me now and then, the people in the house never suspected the truth."

"Do you know that you will have to establish proof of his death?"

"Mercy on me! what does that statement say?"

"I see."

"Isn't that enough?"

"Perhaps, but one thing remains. You will have to prove that you are his mother."

The old woman moved across the room and pulled the picture from the wall.

She was going to touch the hidden button and in a moment she would discover that she had been robbed.

Broadway Zach waited with interest.

Mother Doss opened the door in the wall and ran her hand into the opening.

All at once she fell back and turned upon the detective with a blanched face as she sunk into the nearest chair.

"It is gone!" she cried.

Zach sprang up with an exclamation of sympathy.

"What is gone?"

"All that life is worth living for."

"Your money?"

"More than money! More than all the gold in the world can buy."

"The record of your marriage and your son's birth?"

"Yes, and more than that. The papers which Prince Peter left with me."

"When?"

"When he came over from the Old World. He gave them to me to hide from his enemies."

"From enemies in this country?"

"Yes."

"Who were they?"

"The woman whom he is said to have robbed, the man who went to see her, and the old yellow rat who lives on the alley and pretends to read the stars and look into one's past and future."

Zach walked over to the little opening and pretended to make sure that the documents were missing.

"They're not there, for I have good eyes if I am old," cried Mother Doss, her eyes following him. "I can see clear back to the end of the hole where I hid them. They're gone!"

"But who robbed you? That's the question."

"One of two men, for the woman is dead."

"She is?"

"Yes, they say she was murdered in her fine house on some street where the rich live. Her name? It was Mrs. Denia Totten, for Prince Peter came home one night and told me that he had one persecutor less, and I told him, that, after all, she might not have given him any trouble. One of two men did it and if you were an officer—if you were one of those men who look after criminals instead of after estates for lost heirs—I would give you a clue to that

woman's death which would tighten a noose for the guilty."

"You would, Mother Doss? Well, I have a friend who is one of the shadows of the city, and if you would only trust me enough—"

"No, I'll tell him, not you."

Zach felt the strangeness of the situation now. He might be at the threshold of another secret, but he could not proceed.

"Well, Mother Doss, I will deceive you no longer. I am both heir-hunter and a detective."

She sprang up and glared at him from near the wall.

"Mebbe you're the same man who was manacled to Prince Peter when the wreck occurred."

"Perhaps," said Zach coolly.

"Then to you—nothing!" cried the old woman. "But why not?"

She had come forward again and dropped back into the chair.

"He is dead and I want vengeance, for if you are the man who arrested him you may help me turn on the hand that stole the documents and we will go together to the end and see the villain hanged."

"That's what I'm here for. Tell me what you know and the papers shall come back."

Her old face lighted up with a flash of revenge and seemed to get younger as the deep-set eyes blazed for the man of many trails.

"You will go to Fezzam, the yellow-skinned serpent of the alley. You will search his place. Over the smoked mantel in the room where he works you will find one brick that protrudes a little. Pull it out and thrust in your hand. You will find something that will pay you!"

"Who gave you this secret?"

"Prince Peter."

"If the old man has fled he may have taken the treasure with him."

"No. It is there—behind the protruding brick. Go, go! Another hour and you may be too late!"

Zach turned and left the dirty room. Was it another clue and probably the last one?

As the door shut upon him Mother Doss's face grew crimson.

"Let him go! Prince Peter, Mother Doss has revenged you. The detective has gone to his death in the demon's den!"

CHAPTER XXV.

FEZZAM COMES BACK.

CAPTAIN KIDLACE, well known to the reader, sat in his sumptuous room with a bottle of wine on the table and a box of cigars at his elbow.

The man was alone and the clock that ticked away the minutes of his career on the wall was about to send forth the tidings that it was ten.

It was ten at night, and the somewhat dandy—the man who had become mixed up in the mystery which Zach Zebedee was tracking down—saw his own reflection in a mirror on the opposite wall.

He had not taken well to the notoriety which the murder of Mrs. Totten had brought him.

In the first place, he was not regarded as a very truthful man at Police Headquarters, for he had contradicted some of his first statements, and Zach Zebedee had wormed from him several chapters of his own life as well as one from the career of Prince Peter.

All alone in his bachelor quarters Captain Kidlace was enjoying the hour as best he could when the bell tinkled and he rose and walked into the hall.

He was his own servant that night, Bella and Joe having obtained permission to go to the opera which neither understood, and he had resolved to devote a part of the evening to thought and seclusion.

The well-dressed captain opened the door with the intention of announcing in person that he was not at home to any caller just then; but he did nothing of the kind.

A tall, rather slender figure greeted him as he pulled wide the door, and a pair of uncommon black eyes peeped from behind lashes of the same hue.

Captain Kidlace held the door open and the man entered.

He led the way back to the parlor where he turned suddenly on his visitor.

At the same time a hand removed a hat, a coat opened, and the captain with a cry of surprise fell into his chair and almost gasped:

"You? In heaven's name, where did you come from?"

"Where should I come from but from the battle-field?" was the answer.

"I thought you were out of the city. I was sure—"

"Be sure of nothing but death."

"And the infernal Cord, eh?"

The other smiled and Captain Kidlace watched the darkish face with illy-concealed looks of hatred.

Fezzam, who had revealed himself when he doffed the hat and opened the coat, crossed his long legs and seemed to take in for a moment the sumptuousness of the apartment.

"You live well here," he said.

"Yes."

"Plenty of money?"

"Perhaps."

"And the last man who saw her alive?"

Captain Kidlace started forward.

"See here. They can't prove that," said he.

"They never can establish anything of the kind, I don't care how many sleuths they put on the trail. I went home with her from the theater. I left her in the parlor."

"You went back, though."

"I did."

"Did you tell them that yet?"

"I have told them all this," said Captain Kidlace.

"But you hated her."

"I never loved her."

"Ha, was the maid the prettier?"

"Perhaps I thought so."

"Where is she?"

"I don't know."

"Do you often lose those whom you fall in love with?"

"I've lost Rosa, anyhow."

"Swear it on this."

The long fingers of Fezzam pulled from his bosom a black cord, at sight of which the captain laughed.

"That has a familiar look," he said with a smile of braggadocio.

"You acknowledge its power."

"I did once."

Old Fezzam looked at him with a dark frown.

"You belong."

"I did once."

"Once means forever."

"Does it?" said the captain, as he watched the eyes that shone like a serpent's in the light of his gas.

"You took the oaths in Algiers."

"And got hunted out of the country for my pains, too."

"We stood by you!"

"Ho, did you? You got me into the muddle with the French officer. You wove about me the snare which you made for me and you brought on the duel in which the husband of Denia lost his life."

Fezzam made no reply. He was looking across the room at a large oil painting that adorned the wall—a scene in some foreign country.

"That's it. Go and see if you recognize it," said the captain. "I got an artist to paint it from directions which I furnished. You will see that it is a good reproduction—there are the trees and over yonder the walls of the fort. You will see two people in the foreground and if you will look sharp you will perceive others half-hidden among the shadows on the left of the picture."

Fezzam, who had risen and crossed the room, was studying the painting while the captain regarded him with a sinister smile.

"It's good so far as it goes," said the Algerine coming back. "I see the old fort where the beauty lived, and the trees where her husband died that night."

"And your own face among the bushes?"

"I saw that, too."

"Well, you never stood by me as you should have done. I did not kill Captain Totten, though my sword was at his breast one moment. It was the Black Cord what whirled from out the shadows. It was the accursed cord that encircled his neck even as I rushed forward with my sword."

"But they found a sword hole in his heart."

"Yes, but it was not my intention to kill him and you know it."

"But you fled."

"I was dragged from the scene. I was put on board a pirate craft and drugged until the vessel was far out to sea when I was permitted to come to myself. Then it was too late to go back and throw myself at the feet of Denia Totten. It is true that I half believed that I had killed him; but the more I thought about it the firmer became my belief that it was the work of the Black Cord."

During these words Fezzam sat bolt upright, watching the speaker with unvarying look.

"No matter what happened that night. You still belong."

"I have left the League. I have crossed the ocean and I am not one of you."

"The Black Cord has more work for you," said Fezzam, not heeding the captain's reply.

"It has work for you, I say."

"I won't obey."

"You will obey, sir. I have come to give you the command of the Brotherhood of the Sands."

Captain Kidlace uncrossed his legs and laid his unlighted cigar on the edge of the table.

"What is the order?" he asked, his lips seeming to part just a little and his hand raising an inch.

"It is this: We want the box. It must come back into our hands. It was found by Prince Peter, but it was lost. We have sent Fuzille after it; but she has not found it."

"How do you know?"

"Because she has not reported."

"Have you waited long enough?"

"Ever since last night."

"Perhaps she did not know where to look."

"She had but two places to search and she has had time to search them."

"I can't go. I am not in the League any longer. This is true."

"You belong," said the lips of Fezzam. "You belong now as you did the night you fought the French officer in Algiers."

"The night you killed him."

"We want the box!"

"Yonder is my door, Chief Fezzam. You know the way out and probably the trail to the box. In heaven's name, why did you leave it in the house that night?"

There was no start at this exclamation, only the long hands of Fezzam seemed to separate.

Captain Kidlace got up and stood looking down upon the old man in the chair.

"There was a time," said he, "when I was in the net, but I am not there any longer. I don't care for your commands. I care not for a thousand orders if all emanate from the Black Cord. Time came when I did not like the woman for whom I would have given my blood across the seas and the sands. I had intended to break with her that fatal night. I never intended to visit her again. Did you guess that, Fezzam? Did the Magic Child tell you this? Or was it a part of the compact which you made with Satan when you were young, if ever you had any boyhood—that he should tell you what others were about to do?"

"The box is out yonder!" cried Fezzam, stretching forth his arm and covering the door. "As the last chief of the Black Cord, as your master, 'Captain Kidlace,' as they call you here, I command you to go and bring me the box of death and rest."

"Where is it?"

"He must have it—he, the detective who is on the trail. The man who unravels mysteries knows where it is. You have seen him; you know where his den is and you must bring from there the box which we must have to be safe from all trouble with the ferrets of America."

If Captain Kidlace was a dandy sometimes he was not a coward.

If his hands were gloved they were ready to do desperate work when he considered his own interests at stake.

In another instant he had fallen upon Fezzam like an eagle swoops upon a lamb, but here the metaphor ends.

Fezzam was no lamb; he was the serpent of the faraway sands of Algeria, the transplanted snake of death, and his fangs were deadly poison.

Captain Kidlace pressed his knee against the old man's bosom as he doubled him up in the chair.

Then he pulled him out and held him in a grip of iron as he looked into his face with a demon's triumph.

It was all the work of one mad minute and before Fezzam could collect his scattered senses,

"If any one hunts up the box it shall be you!" cried Captain Kidlace. "You can carry out your own commands for I am not in it any longer. There was a time when I belonged to the accursed League; but now I am out of it, and when you come hither and tell me to add a new crime to those already set against me, you simply mistake your man."

Fezzam replied with his eyes, for one of the captain's hands was at his throat and he was dragged toward the door where he was jammed against the wall and held there while the gloved hands of the mad man seemed to meet behind his wind-pipe.

"I wouldn't kill you for all the money on Wall street," said Captain Kidlace. "I will leave you to the man of vengeance, for sooner or late he will run the guilty down. I have refused to help him up to this moment; but now I will give him another clue. Come, sit down here and sign a statement which I will prepare. You have played serpent and spider long enough. Ah, there you are. Now sit still while I get pens and paper."

The body of Fezzam nearly toppled from the chair as Captain Kidlace left it a moment, and when he had taken the pens from a drawer he looked at the Algerine with a start.

Fezzam had pitched headlong to the floor.

"I guess I choked him a little too hard," grinned the captain as he stooped over the body.

The next moment he sprang up and staggered across the room, then he fell against the wall, with a red streak like the sudden scratch of a pin across his right cheek.

And while he lay there the eyes of Fezzam, rolling in their sockets, watched him with a devil's delight.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL.

MEANTIME Broadway Zach was on his way to the den formerly occupied by Fezzam of Algiers.

Mother Doss, with the cunning of a creature of her class, and with revenge uppermost in her heart, had sent the detective to what she firmly believed would prove his death.

Now that she had discovered the man that had

hunted Prince Peter down and who had manacled himself to him on the train which was wrecked, she was determined to avenge the loss of her hand, and this is why she sent the detective upon the most dangerous mission of his life.

Zach took the old woman at her word, but if he could have seen the expression on her face when he closed her door behind him he might have paused ere he reached the portal of Fezzam's place and turned from the terrible fate hidden under the roof of that old house.

But there was no one to step between the detective and death.

No one? We shall see.

In telling him that behind a loose brick in the wall above the mantel he would find something, Mother Doss showed that she was familiar with the house as well as with some of old Fezzam's secrets.

Behind that brick, so the old hag let on, was to be found the secret which Zach wanted—a clue to the mystery of N—street.

They were birds in the same nest, Mother Doss, Fezzam and all.

When the detective gained the old shanty in the alley not far from the busy street it was dark and looked forbidding.

The button found on the floor by Doctor Kirby told him that Fuzilie since her flight had made the house her hiding-place, but of course she was not there now and he would have to look elsewhere for the hunted girl.

Perhaps the clue which he was to find behind the brick would tell him something about her and if nothing happened, in a little while he would know more.

Zach found the house quite deserted, but this was no more than he expected.

He entered and went to the room where Fezzam had held forth with Zulef, the Magic Child, and his dupes.

The old rascal and man of mystery was not there.

Striking a match on the wall, Zach let the light flare up and began to inspect the apartment.

He had not been there since his visit which resulted in the taking away of little Zulef then secreted in the house of a friend where he knew she would be safe and beyond the wiles of her master.

The mantel stood before him and he ran the match along the wall in search of the loose brick indicated by Mother Doss.

He discovered it just as the little flame expired, but a noise which startled him caused him to draw back and listen.

He was almost certain that he had heard a door open and shut and this told him that he was not the sole one in the house at that time.

But the seconds wore away without a repetition of the noise, and Zach returned to his work.

He struck another match, and then moved toward the mantel again.

Now that he had located the brick he would take it out, secure what was behind it, and quit the place with the prize in his possession.

Holding the match in one hand, with the other he tugged at the brick, and just as it fell out on the mantel, he was startled by a voice.

"Don't! There is death in that hole!"

The words caused the detective to whirl swiftly, and the match showed him the childish figure of little Zulef, the Magic Child.

He dropped the light, sprang forward and caught the child in his arms.

"What brought you hither?" he asked.

"I thought I would come back again and see if the dark girl was here."

"The dark girl, child?"

"Yes, the one who used to come and see us."

"What was her name?"

"Fezzam called her Keta, but she called herself to me Fuzilie."

"Ho, the Algerine!" exclaimed the ferret.

"Has she been here lately?"

"I found her here not long ago, but I ran off when she wanted to detain me."

"Fuzilie is gone, and we are alone in this house. But how did you find the way hither?"

"Oh, I can find the way anywhere after I sleep awhile."

Zach thought of the hole in the wall.

A third match was lit and he held it above his head as he looked at little Zulef.

"What was that you said about the hole yonder? You told me to keep my hand out of it, didn't you, child?"

"I did," she laid her hand on the ferret's arm.

"There is death there, for I have seen old Fezzam handle it."

"What do you mean?"

"Look!" cried Zulef, pointing to the hole above the mantel. "There! don't you see it now?"

Zach advanced across the room with the burning match and held it close to the place where the loose brick had been.

He saw it!

A flat head rested on the bottom brick, and two eyes that glinted wildly and deadly, as he could see, showed themselves as he looked.

It was the head of a serpent, and a forked tongue ran in and out while he gazed.

"It is the green snake from his native land," said Zulef, her hand still resting on the detective's arm. "I have seen him feed it and let it wind around his neck. It never tried to bite him, though I know its bite is death for it has killed animals for him when he was alone. Don't kill it, but replace the brick and shut it up in its den."

Zach's first impulse was to shatter the head of the snake with a bullet, but he took Zulef's advice and catching up the brick, he suddenly thrust it back into its place and turned to the little one.

"Mother Doss knew of this," he thought. "The old woman near the sky knew what was behind that brick. She sent me to what she confidently thought would be my death, but the little one has saved my life. We will even things up by and by, Mother Doss, for you are not as harmless as you look—not by a long shot."

The motif that had animated the breast of the old woman was apparent to the city ferret, for he recalled the meaning of Prince Peter and his death according to the telegram which Hornets had sent from Sandycroft; and when he thought of the old hag's villainy he could not suppress a smile.

He and Zulef were in the dark, but the child was on his knees and his arm held her while she shuddered there.

Zulef told him all about her encounter with Fuzilie in the house; how she had gone into a trance for the Algerine, and how she had effected her escape just when she believed the hunted girl meant mischief deep and dark.

Zach by Zulef's direction searched the house, but nothing rewarded him.

"Do you want me to see for you?" lisped the child as her slender arms encircled his neck.

"In the dark, child?"

"It makes no difference to me," was the reply.

"I can 'see' in the dark as well as in the light, so, if you want me to trace anybody for you I can do it, for I feel so much stronger since leaving old Fezzam's place."

"Just as you wish," said Zach. "I don't want to tire you out, Zulef, for when you have ceased to go into those trances you will become a very strong girl and be happy once more."

"I have never been very happy," sighed little Zulef. "Never until I ran across you."

The voice seemed to die away in a whisper, and the hand which rested in the detective's palm grew cold.

Zach spoke to her, but there was no reply, and he was on the eve of striking a light when he remembered that she might have passed into one of her strange trances.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"I see a man. It is Fezzam."

"Where is he now?"

"In a small room with an old woman."

"What is the room like, Zulef?"

"It is a dirty place with a reddish curtain which is patched across one half of it."

"It is Mother Doss's place," thought Zach Zebedee. "Can the old Algerine be with the old hag?"

"I see Fezzam with the old woman, and they are talking together like old friends. She came to see us once and had a long talk with my old master."

"Can you hear what they are talking about?"

"Hardly. They are talking in whispers, and though I listen with all ears I cannot make out much—only a word here and there. The old woman is telling Fezzam something that seems to make her eyes snap. She chuckles while she talks, and the old man is grinning, too."

Zach waited a moment for the child to proceed, but as she did not, he passed his hand over her face and the arms loosened about his neck.

The trance had ended.

Lifting Zulef, Zach struck a light and looked down into her white face.

"Did I tell anything for you?" asked the little creature.

"Yes, a good deal," answered Zach.

"Was it something you wanted to know?"

"Yes."

"I am very glad, then, for you have been kind to me."

Eager to follow the clue which the child had given him, Zach Zebedee carried Zulef from the house and hailed the first passing cab in which he took her home.

Bidding her remain there and subdue her desire to roam out, he turned back and was soon passing down the street which had Mother Doss for a resident.

He wondered if Fezzam was still with the old woman.

Had the interview terminated, or were the two together still, the old Algerine grinning over what Mother Doss was saying?

Zach paused a moment in front of the house, and readjusted the beard which he had clapped to his face to prevent recognition by certain parties.

He longed to confront Mother Doss as one whom she had sent to his death by the sting of a serpent.

It would do him good to reappear to the mother of Prince Peter as a man who had come back from the dead, and while he crept up the stairs which would lead him to the old woman's room, he thought of many things connected with the Mystery of N—street.

All at once a door overhead opened and then footsteps came down the stairs.

Zach stepped among the shadows at the foot of the landing where he happened to be and waited.

A tall form came to where he stood.

There was nothing in outward appearance to tell him that he was looking at the chief of the Black Cord; but the eyes named Fezzam as plainly as if the man's lips had spoken that name.

It was Fezzam and the interview with Mother Doss had just terminated.

Old Fezzam came on till he could have touched the detective if he had but put out his hand.

Zach watched him until he had passed on and his feet sent back no sound for he had gained the street.

"I'll let him go," thought Zach. "I will run up and see Mother Doss. She will be very glad to know what has happened since we parted—that the little snake in the wall hasn't killed any one after all!"

All was quiet beyond Mother Doss's door.

Zach did not knock, but turned the knob silently and the portal opened.

The room was dimly lighted, but he saw the patched curtain described by little Zulef during her trance, and then he noticed the well-known figure of Mother Doss in her old chair.

There was a strange look in the eyes, a staring at the wall, and as Zach caught up the lamp he saw that death was in that room, for Mother Doss had met with that dread change which comes in time to all mankind.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A LIE FROM WHOLE CLOTH.

It was quite natural that the detective should associate the death of Mother Doss with the visit and flight of Fezzam.

She sat almost bolt upright in the chair, her arms hanging over its sides and her eyes looking at the wall straight ahead, as if they saw there the last scene of all.

Perhaps it was the face of the man from Algiers, or the destroying hand, dark and silken.

For some moments Zach looked at the old woman and then began to search the place for a clue.

The position of the two chairs it contained told him where Fezzam had sat while talking to Mother Doss; but beyond this—nothing.

The old man may have sprung upon his victim, or have risen softly and killed by some mysterious agent of which he knew nothing.

All at once Zach thought of Doctor Kirby.

He went out and down to the street.

He went direct to the little doctor's house and rung the bell.

The police surgeon was at home and smiled when he saw the slightly perturbed face of the ferret of the streets.

"Come in, Zach."

"No, get your hat and come with me."

"Something urgent?"

"Yes, another death-stroke, perhaps."

Together doctor and detective climbed the stairs and entered the room where Mother Doss had lived.

Doctor Kirby looked once at the old woman and stopped.

"Another one, eh, Zebedee?" he said.

"That is what I want you to tell me."

In another moment the little doctor was bending over the dead woman and Zach stood off and watched him.

"It's poison again," said Kirby at last. "But it is not the same kind that killed Mrs. Totten. That was in the eye. This is in the veins. See!"

He lifted one of the old woman's wrinkled hands and held it toward the light.

"You know more about such things than I do," smiled Zach. "I must refer to your professional judgment in such cases."

"Shut the door. Don't let any one in here. I hear some one outside."

The detective went to the door and slipped the bolt.

Suddenly Doctor Kirby turned to the ferret and said with a curious look in his deep penetrating eyes:

"You haven't recovered the box yet?"

"Not yet."

"What have you seen to-night?"

Zach in a few words related all the visits to Mother Doss, the trip to Fezzam's den, the snake in the hole, little Zulef's trance, the return to Mother Doss's, the sight of Fezzam on the stairs and his disappearance toward the street.

When he had finished Doctor Kirby remarked that he had seen a good deal and had had a very narrow escape from death by the fangs of the serpent in the wall.

"I was thinking of hunting you up when you rung my bell," said the doctor. "I have had a rather singular adventure myself. I have been called to save the life of Captain Kidlace. It was a close call for the captain."

"For the captain? How?"

"I was passing his house when I heard the cries of one in intense agony, and standing not on ceremony, as is usual with me in such cases, I rushed up the steps, found the door unlocked and dashed into the house. I found the captain in great agony in the parlor, lying on the floor, rolling and pitching everywhere, as if he were suffering all the torments of the damned."

"I picked him up and placed him in his chair, gave him a powerful narcotic and watched the result. He came back to himself gradually and begged me to save his life. He pointed to his cheek and upon examination I discovered there a slight red scratch like that which a pin makes. He cried out that the poison had entered his veins through the scratch, and I saw that he was suffering from some terrible poison, and one that was far-reaching in its results."

"He insisted that I still belonged to the Cord," cried the captain, hardly knowing what he was saying. "He told me that I had to obey the command of the League and when I refused he would have forced me, but I held him against the wall till I had choked him well when I dragged him to the table."

"Well," said I, "what then?" "He fell to the floor like one dead and when I stooped to see what was the matter I received the scratch and fell from him in dreadful agony, knowing that he had touched me with the Needle, one of the death instruments of the Black Cord."

"So the old fellow has been paying his respects to the captain," smiled Broadway Zach. "If what you saw was a sample of his work, why not this?"

"Certainly, why not this?" and the doctor glanced at Mother Doss.

"How did you leave the captain?"

"Fairly well, but in a terribly nervous state. He was swearing vengeance against the old man and his arts and asked me if I wouldn't find you and fetch you to his house."

"Shall we go now and leave this case for the police?"

"Just as you wish, Zach, but first one word about another matter," and Doctor Kirby lightly touched the ferret's arm. "Rosa, the maid who lived with Mrs. Totten when she was murdered, has left with me a sealed paper."

"Why with you, doctor?"

"I hardly know. She would not give any reason, and when I asked her if she wanted it placed in the hands of the inspector she said not at least for ten days."

"Which might mean that Rosa wants that much time in which to get away."

"I thought so at the time."

"When did she do this, doctor?"

"About an hour before my adventure at Captain Kidlace's house."

As he spoke Doctor Kirby took from an inner pocket a package which had been tied and sealed with red wax in a neat manner, showing that the hand of a woman had done the work.

"Rosa did not seem to be the least excited," continued the doctor. "She came to my house cool and collected and talked like a sensible girl."

"There is something which the girl can solve, but she may not have done so in the paper," remarked the detective. "But we will go down to the captain and see what he wanted."

They quitted the old house together and proceeded across the city till Doctor Kirby rung the bell of Captain Kidlace's home.

As there was no response, he turned to Zach with a smile saying:

"I suppose we are privileged enough to enter without rapping, and then the captain may be too nervous to answer the bell in person."

They found the man in gloves seated where Kirby had left him, and when they had crossed the threshold of the sumptuously furnished room he looked at Zach with a curious leer in his eyes.

"You're always on hand," said he.

"I try to be," replied the detective.

"I told the doctor to find you if he could and I see that he knew where to look for you."

Captain Kidlace's voice sunk to low tones as he ended, and then he put his hand to his face and with a look at the doctor continued:

"It comes back at short intervals--the pain does. I never felt anything like it. It is now a sweet pain if I may so speak, and then it tears my very muscles as it sends its torments throughout my face. I am half-dead already and shall never recover from the scratch of the Algerian Needle."

He looked at Zach as he talked and then fairly faced the detective.

"I want you to hear my confession. You have a good memory and I won't detain you very long. You are not at the end of the trail yet?"

"Not quite, captain."

"You are nearer than you think, Zach Zebadee. You need look no further than this room for the man who killed Denia Totten."

Doctor and detective exchanged looks and the former started as he turned again to the calm man in the arm-chair.

"I am the man!"

A momentary silence followed these words.

"You have had several theories in regard to

this crime," Captain Kidlace resumed. "You have believed that a hand wither than mine did the deed. You have even suspected Rosa, the maid; you have thought that perhaps Fuzille sneaked back with death in her grasp and killed her former mistress; and then you have turned at last to old Fezzam as the certain slayer."

He paused and placed his hand to his cheek as he bit his lower lip half through.

"I throw all my former stories whether written or spoken to the winds. They are lies manufactured from whole cloth. They deceived you, captain, and your shrewd chief of police. They picked up the doctor here, and hoodwinked the whole city. I am the man, I say. This is the hand which killed the handsome widow of N— street, the woman who belonged herself to the Black Cord, though she never took the Serpent Degrees."

Such a revelation was indeed startling.

Zach Zebadee looked at the speaker as calm as a May morning and studied the pain-racked face.

"Do you know that one of your acquaintances died to-night?" he asked.

"One—of—my—acquaintances?" slowly repeated Captain Kidlace.

"Mother Doss."

"Prince Peter's mother? Dead, you say?"

"Dead," put in little Doctor Kirby.

Captain Kidlace seemed to refresh his memory for he passed his hand across his brow.

"I wonder what became of the papers which Prince Peter must have given her?" he went on.

"Did you search for them, captain?"

"Yes, and found them."

Kyrle Kidlace was on his feet in an instant.

"You found them, did you?" he cried, glaring at the detective. "I don't see how you found them when I searched every nook of the old woman's house."

"She unwittingly led me to their hiding-place," was the reply. "She gave them away."

"And you read them?"

"Every word."

"Well?"

"I have made up my mind. I believe I know who killed Denia Totten."

"I have told you who did it. I have just told you that Captain Kidlace is the man."

"And you have, for some purpose, just spun another lie out of whole cloth," answered the detective while the little doctor's look became a blank stare.

The effect upon Captain Kidlace was a strange one. He seemed to dig his hands into the sides of his chair; but not a word came from his lips.

"You have played another hand, but not quite so adroit as some you have played heretofore. You are prolific when it comes to making confessions and writing out statements for the police and the public. You know as well as I do that you never killed Denia Totten, the Frenchman's widow who was murdered at her home on N— street. Captain Kidlace, you have been touched by the poisoned needle of the Order of the Black Cord; but you never took the life of the woman whose husband you once fought in the shadows of the trees near the old fort in Algiers. I shall not even arrest you for the crime, notwithstanding your confession. If I believed that you killed her I would walk from this house with you by my side; but I will let you remain."

"Is the ferret of New York—the shrewd man-hunter of America—mad?" asked Captain Kidlace, turning to Doctor Kirby.

"Have it just as it suits you," smiled Zach Zebadee. "I don't want you, Captain Kidlace. You may quit New York or die where you are, I don't care which—in either event society will rejoice; but I don't want you for the murder of Denia Totten. Come, doctor."

As the detective rose the hand of the man in gloves fell heavily upon the table.

"All right! I have given you a chance to win renown, but you refuse. You have lost the whole game now, Zach Zebadee!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE STORY HORNETS TOLD.

"WHAT do you think of that?" asked little Kirby, as the two left the irate captain to his meditations.

"A strong man," was the reply. "I have met his match in some things. He is as cool as a genuine desperado, and if he had been reared among the mines he would have been a cool head in gloves. He deliberately lied when he confessed to the murder of Mrs. Totten."

"Then you really think so?"

"It is barely possible for him to be the murderer. I will stake my head that he is not, yet, you saw how cool he was while he talked? He had made up the whole story while he waited for you to fetch me. That man hated Mrs. Totten; there's no doubt of that. We know that he went back to the house after the 'good-night,' that Rosa, the maid, found on the table at the dead woman's hand the paper which she concealed, for fear that it would implicate Captain Kidlace. If that paper had been written by Mrs. Totten with the intention of fastening the crime upon him, there would be some use of looking into his case, but she never wrote it

with that design, if she penned it at all. We shall see. Old Fezzam is still dangerous, as you have seen by the death of Mother Doss in her little 'sky parlor,' and by the attempt on Captain Kidlace's life."

"But the girl? Fuzilie?"

"We are coming back to her now," replied Zach. "We will see what has become of the yellow beauty."

"Do you think we shall find her in the city?"

"That depends. If she has heard of the death of Prince Peter, she may not be found here."

Zach went back to his Broadway retreat in time to greet a boy who came up with another telegram.

"It may be from my little Vidocq at the other end of the line," said the detective as he opened the envelope and read:

"Prince Peter is still in the land of the living, but has vanished. DICKERY."

Zach Zebadee handed it to the doctor.

"I don't understand this," said Kirby, looking up with a puzzled expression.

"Hornets must have been deceived about the death. He will explain when he comes on."

Half an hour later the door of the little office opened and a boy slipped in.

It was Hornets.

"Not at home, eh? Well, the old place looks familiar, so I'll just sit down and wait."

He did so, throwing his hat upon the table and leaning back in the chair he was wont to occupy when in the ferret's room.

The boy looked travel-stained and somewhat weary.

It was evident that he had just come back from some place out of the city, and while he waited for his master he drummed on the table, and now and then let an amused smile cross his face.

"I've had some funny times since I went away," he murmured. "I've seen some things that look very strange and I don't know what to think about them. But Zach will let some light in upon the puzzle when he comes. He will tell me what I have missed by being away and I will give him all I know about Prince Peter's death and resurrection."

The clock ticked on and the boy waited as before.

He was about to go out for a breath of air when he heard footsteps in the hall and recognizing them he watched the door to see it open and reveal the man for whom he had waited.

"Hello!" said Zach with a laugh. "You nearly beat your last telegram through."

"Did I? Well, I've had a time sure enough. I never saw anything like it."

Hornets leaned on the table with his chin between his arms, a favorite position of his, and for a moment studied Zach's countenance.

"You've been puzzled at this end of the line, haven't you?" he asked.

"A little."

"Well, they do some queer things over in Jersey. For instance, they leave people dead in chairs and soon afterward you see 'em walking around apparently as well as ever."

Broadway Zach sat down; he knew the boy had a story to tell.

Hornets proceeded until he came to the supposed killing of Prince Peter in the arm-chair by Fezzam, a scene which he had witnessed from the window; there he paused and smiled.

"When I came back from the depot," said he, "after sending you that telegram saying that Prince Peter had shuffled off this mortal coil, I expected to see him still dead in the chair; but he wasn't there. I looked awhile and then heard some one in the path moving toward the station. I followed and saw Fezzam board the train for New York. For some time I thought of following him, but I concluded to go back and watch the house, expecting to discover what he had done with the corpse of Prince Peter."

"It was an uncanny thing to do, but I nerved myself to the task and went boldly to work. It was no use looking for Prince Peter in that room for he wasn't there at all, so I turned away and began to look elsewhere. You remember that I had sent the telegram mentioning the death, but the longer I looked the more I became convinced that something almost supernatural had taken place. The people who seem to live in that house were not to be seen. Indeed, they had given it over to Prince Peter, for I did not see them after the first night there."

"If the Prince's body was anywhere it must be concealed in the house or on the premises, so I searched every hole and corner. Thus the night passed, I looking everywhere for a man, who, as I was to discover was not dead at all. Morning began to dawn and I was compelled to go back to my nest in the barn. I dared not show myself during the day, notwithstanding the fact that I had seen Fezzam board the train, and I was sharp enough to play out this hand to the very end."

"It was noon before I saw anything that startled me, and then I happened to see one of the shutters of the house open just a mite, and I caught a glimpse of eyes. Then I saw a white

face, and the next moment from my hiding-place I saw Prince Peter look out toward the barn. I could not believe my eyes for a minute, for hadn't I seen him choked by old Fezzam the night before in the house? Yet here he was, as large as life at the window, grinning, with his arm in the sling as before and his face resembling the marbles in the cemetery.

"I did not get a long look at the white face at the window, for the shutter was suddenly closed and Prince Peter vanished again. I kept my place in the hay and watched all that day, but saw nothing more that startled me. I could imagine the man in the house alone after receiving such treatment at Fezzam's hands; I could see him smiling over the way in which he had cheated the old villain and death, and when night came I redoubled my vigilance."

"A good idea, Hornets."

"It needed redoubling, for I was playing against as shrewd a man as ever lived. You know something of Prince Peter. A man who has escaped from a prison in France and that after he was branded, must be a clever rogue from the ground up. Well, I managed to steal away long enough to send the dispatch that he wasn't dead, for I had discovered this by seeing the face at the window, but the lazy operator at the depot must have held the telegram back, for I could not have come on its heels the way I have. Why, I let several hours elapse between the sending of that message and my own start from Jersey."

"Those country operators can't be depended on," said the detective. "I've had to do with them, and unless you watch them you are not likely to get anything like the service you do in the cities."

"That's what, and the fellow at Sandycroft seems to be a Smart Aleck—one of those chaps who want to know the why and wherefore of the telegrams that pass over the wires. Well, after sending the dispatch, I went back to the house, for there was Prince Peter to watch, you see. I didn't intend to let him get away without my knowledge, for the way in which he looked out of the window seemed to tell me that he was anxious to try his wings, if one of them was somewhat crippled. I crept back to the house and went to the old window."

"All was as still as death in the place. I waited awhile, but as no one came into the room to tell me anything I resolved to get inside myself."

"It was a little risky, I know, for a hunted man like Prince Peter gets desperate; but this didn't stop me. I made my way to the rear of the old house where there was a porch, and tried one of the windows there. It was a noisy window, noisier than I liked, but it was the best I could do and I got inside at last."

"I found myself in the darkest room I have ever seen and when I had groped about awhile I discovered a door which I almost feared to open. I thought it led to the room where I had witnessed the interview between Prince Peter and old Fezzam. When I opened that door—it seemed that every door in the house was unlocked—I saw before me the very room, but it was empty. A light burned low on the table and the arm-chair was where I saw it last; but no Prince Peter rewarded my eyes."

"This stumped me; not a little for I began to fear that after all I had seen a vision of one dead at the back window; but I went into another room and stopped. This was a sleeping chamber, the only one I found in the house; but the bed had not been tumbled. I searched that house everywhere, growing bolder and bolder as I found nothing, and when I came out of the cellar, the ground of which I had poked with sharp stick, I was ready to believe anything."

"If Prince Peter was not to be found, why stay in Jersey? That's what I thought, Captain Zach, and knowing that a train was nearly due, I went over to the little depot and waited. Presently into the place came an old man with a coat hanging from his shoulders for the night was cool. He took a seat in the darkest corner of the place, and I hugged my own corner the moment I set eyes on him. It looked like Prince Peter, all but the long beard which reached nearly to his waist, and I wondered if that was my man disguised."

"He appeared to be waiting for a train and I waited with him playing off sleep, for he now and then looked over my way and seemed about to come over and investigate if I was playing possum or was really in the arms of Morpheus."

"The moment the train whistled he moved and drew with one hand the cloak about his shoulders. I followed him out upon the platform, but to my care that he did not see me. We waited together and when the train pulled up alongside he nimbly sprang aboard and was gone."

"I entered the car and found him sitting alone in the darkest part of it and when we started he settled back, still keeping the cloak over his shoulders. Of course he was watched all the way to New York, for, having discovered that he wasn't dead at all, I didn't intend to let him escape me."

"At the ferry he called a cab and was driven off. He went up-town at breakneck speed, as if he had paid the driver double, and I had

barely time to hang on behind where I was bumped over the crossings and shaken up enough to last me till I'm a hundred. Now, Captain Zach, that is my story. Prince Peter, not dead, is back upon his native heath. He is among us with a broken wing and ready to play some hand in this mystery which we are after. I shadowed the cab to a little street which I never suspected him of knowing anything about and he alighted and dodged into a hall and was lost."

"But you know where it is?"

"Certainly, that's a part of my business, Zach."

"There can be no mistake, boy?"

"None whatever," answered Hornets with confidence. "I wouldn't trail the wrong man for the world, and I can take you this very hour to the hiding-place of Prince Peter. How's Mother Doss?"

Zach Zebedee smiled.

"You let her go on to Philadelphia, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, she came back to New York."

"After she had failed to find Fuglehorn street?"

"I suppose so."

"I did hate to deceive the old woman, that's a fact, Zach, but I saw no other way out of the case. I had to do something to play my hand out, and it was fool Mother Doss or nothing."

"The old woman is dead."

Hornets almost started from his chair.

"Dead? Mother Doss? Why, that's bad. What killed her?"

"A hand, Hornets—the same that gave us the mystery of N— street."

"Murdered, Zach?"

"It looks that way."

"Then Prince Peter is an orphan; but we want to avenge the old lady's death; I do at any rate."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SISTERS.

THE reader, we are confident, has not forgotten the interview between Fuzilie the Algerine and little Zulef in Fezzam's house shortly after the girl's flight with the silver box which she so adroitly stole from Zach, the ferret.

He will recollect that on that occasion the Magic Child went into a trance at Fuzilie's request and saw Zach receive and read the telegram which announced the death of Prince Peter.

The words which followed this act told how deeply in love with the Prince was the beautiful Algerine, and when she declared that the hand which struck Prince Peter down should feel the force of her vengeance, she meant every word of it.

She fled from the house soon after Zulef's departure, for she realized that the child's absence was dangerous to her safety, and she was not the person to be retaken with the box in her possession.

It was the same night of the last scenes recorded and a darkly dressed figure came round a corner dimly lighted and moved through the shadows close to the buildings.

The face was partly hidden by a shawl which was drawn over the features, but a pair of black eyes peeped out and their owner kept on her way.

When near the bridge she darted into an alley-like street and before stopping in front of a certain house looked cautiously behind her.

A moment later she ran up the steps, jerked a bell which tingled in the hall beyond and waited.

The door opened with a good deal of caution and this person slid inside.

There she did not discard her shawl but on the contrary seemed to draw it closer about her shoulders.

The person who had opened the door was a woman of the visitor's height which was medium and she, too, had sharp eyes.

"Is any one in yet?" asked the caller.

"You can go up and see."

A staircase invited ascent and the caller went up and opened a door on the first landing.

In the room beyond she threw off her shawl and disclosed the features of Fuzilie.

At first no one appeared to be in the chamber but herself, but she soon saw a figure stretched on a couch in one corner and she approached eagerly.

The occupant of the bed was a woman with a face strangely like her own, and Fuzilie bent over it and smiled.

"You look frightened, child," said the person in bed.

"Do I? Well, I have seen enough to give me a little fright within the last twenty-four hours. I am tired, Aleta."

The other stretched out her hand and asked wearily:

"When shall we go back, Keta?"

"When I have killed him!" cried Fuzilie, madly.

"Come. You don't mean that. You don't intend to shed blood, my sister?"

"You don't know me, Aleta. You don't

know what has happened. You haven't heard the Magic Child: no, you haven't seen her go into the trance, nor watched the pair of eyes that glinted with evil when their owner sent me from his side on a mission full of peril, even death. Lying here, you see nothing of these things. I shall go back when I have killed him!"

The face of the person on the couch, it was a younger face than Fuzilie's—grey white as lead, and the hand stole out till it touched that of the Algerine.

"Why must you kill any one?" she asked.

"What has happened?"

"He is dead."

"Who is dead?—The chief of the Black Cord?"

"Prince Peter," said Fuzilie, shutting her hands as she straightened in the middle of the room. "No one knows that we are sisters, Aleta. The world is ignorant of this, and it does not know that we have lived in this city, loving, though apart. He is dead, I tell you, and the hand that killed him shall fall lifeless at its accursed owner's side!"

"They will hunt you down then, Gets."

"What care I after my vengeance has been accomplished? Let the ferrets come then. I will laugh at their efforts, for he will be dead and they will not get to arrest him, to let him get away through a rent in the American's laws."

As Fuzilie ended she drew from her bosom something that had a white look.

"See. This is what I sent me after and he promised that if I found it and carried it back to him we should be free from the commands of the Black Cord."

"He may keep his word."

"He broke it even while I was hunting this box in the den of the man-hunter. He killed Prince Peter in whose care I left him and that is why I say that we will not go back to the sands and figs of Algiers until I have shown him that Keta can be a tigress as well as a fawn."

Aleta watched her sister, saw her eyes blaze and her bosom heave with illy suppressed passion, and at last shut her own eyes to exclude the sight.

"Where is he?"

"Perhaps over in Jersey, or mayhap back in this city. But I will find him! The detective may want him and it will be a race for a life; but I will outstrip him, for you know how fleet I used to be under the walls of the French fort."

Fuzilie's words seemed to recall a sunny past in the life of Aleta for she clasped her hands and sighed.

"What is in the box?" she asked, at last turning her eyes in that direction and sighting the box in Fuzilie's hands.

Mrs. Totten's nail bent lower while Aleta raised her body on her elbows and looked.

"I see a little blue vial which seems to hold some liquor," she said.

"It is half full, Aleta. You don't know what it is."

"No," said the younger one shaking her head.

"You have heard of the deadly poison that kills when it falls into the human eye—the poison, the making of which was one of the lost secrets of our faraway land?"

"I have heard. Mother used to talk about it when we were children under the fig trees."

"This is it, sister."

Fuzilie held the blue vial up to Aleta's gaze and laughed.

"With this I shall punish!" she cried.

"What, with that you will commit murder?"

"No, only take vengeance, sister."

Aleta with one of her long, transparent fingers pushed the vial away with a shudder.

"How can you do that?" she cried.

"You have never loved unless it was young Hassan who died with the plague," said Fuzilie. "You don't know what it is to love with the passion of a tigress born and nurtured on the sand of the desert. You lie in your bed, Aleta, and eat fat all day, but you never loved. No, you have never loved!"

"I did love young Hassan, but that was so long ago that I had forgotten him."

"I thought so. You have never seen Prince Peter, the man killed by the hand of this old chief of the Black Cord. You never belonged to the League of silent death—the League which years ago was the terror of all foreigners who came to Algiers. I belong yet, but he promised to let both of us go—Prince Peter and I—if I recovered the silver box which Prince Peter took from the house where my mistress died. She belonged to the Order, too, but she repudiated it. That is death, my sister."

"It must be a terrible Order."

"It is, and Fezzam is its last chief. I shall hunt him down with the silver box, for this is the symbol of death—it is the second death-agent of the League; The Cord is the first."

"How many death-agents have you?"

"Three—the Cord, the unseen water, and the pin."

Aleta shut her eyes again and Fuzilie put the box away.

"I have come to stay with you a little while," said she. "I mean that I shall go forth from this house to find him. I know where he will hide when he comes back. He has another place besides the old den in the alley, for Fezzam is not to be caught napping when he is playing a hand of death against some one."

"You were not in the house the night your mistress died?"

"No, she had turned me off and taken in my place an American."

"I thought you told me once that you left of your own accord, sister."

"Did I? Well, I may have deceived you. I was told to go—I don't know why; but perhaps because he may have told her that I was connected with Prince Peter's work in Paris for which he went to prison."

"Do you think Fezzam told her?"

"No, not Fezzam, but the man who wears gloves all the time. They call him Captain Kidlace, and he was making love to my mistress when she died, for he took her home from the play that night and was the last person to see her alive."

"Did they arrest him?"

"No."

"Why not? He may know something."

"I believe he did pretend to. He even wrote out a statement in his favor and took it in person to the police; but they didn't think much of it, it seems, for they let him go back unquestioned."

"Then you think, Fuzilie—"

The sentence was not completed, for the maid sprung across the room and stopped at the door.

Aleta, paler than before, watched her sister at the portal and waited to see what would follow the spring.

Fuzilie kept one hand concealed beneath her gown and the other rested lightly on the knob.

"It may be 'Boston,'" said Aleta.

Fuzilie turned her gaze upon her sister.

"Who is he?" she asked.

"The little American who waits on me now and then."

"Shall I let him in if it is him?"

"Yes. I have no secrets from Boston."

The next moment a light knock sounded on the door and Aleta said it was "Boston," and Fuzilie opened the door.

In came a humpbacked boy with an oldish face; but the moment he saw Fuzilie he stopped and threw a questioning look toward the girl on the couch.

"What is it, Boston? This is my sister of whom I may have told you. But what has frightened you?"

The boy ran to the bed and leaned over toward Aleta.

"There is an old man in the hall below. I am sure I saw him in the shadow when I came up."

Fuzilie seized the boy and jerked him back from the bed.

"What is he like?" she demanded.

"He is tall, he is slim, he is sharp-eyed and watchful."

"It is Fezzam!" and Fuzilie darted toward the door, but as quick as a flash the girl in bed sprung out and intercepted her.

"What would you do?" she cried, forcing Fuzilie back.

"I would pay him back for killing Prince Peter!"

"In this house would you do that?"

"Why not? Fate has fetched him to me. I will never have another chance like this."

"But they will find him in the hall dead. They will want to know who did it and I will have to meet the keen men of the city who hunt up such things as you have often told me."

Her white hands sunk into Fuzilie's wrist and the sisters eyed one another in silence a moment while the deformed boy watched the tableau, breathless and white-faced.

"I will go!" suddenly cried Fuzilie. "If he escapes me now I may feel the Cord and then you will have no sister, Aleta."

At the same time she flung the younger girl back and again laid her hand on the knob.

Aleta tried to recover; she called to little Boston to bar Fuzilie's way, but the mad maid was too quick for the little agile boy, and the next moment she had thrown the door wide open and stood in the hall with a dagger gripped in her yellow fingers.

She was the living incarnation of vengeance and murder.

CHAPTER XXX.

FEZZAM PLAYS A COOL HAND.

FUZILIE was not to be held back from her purpose.

There was evil in the coal-black eyes of the Algerine and the report which Boston had carried to the room was quite enough to send her blood coursing hot through every vein.

Seeing her in the hall with the dagger in her grasp, both Aleta and the horrified boy fell back, watching her with an interest which was tantamount to a spell.

Presently Fuzilie went to the top of the staircase and looked down.

She could not see to the lower floor owing to

the winding nature of the steps and she was compelled to go down to investigate.

If Fezzam was there, as she suspected, she would come face to face with the chief of the Black Cord and by a blow she would end the life of one who had darkened hers.

The Algerine stopped midway on the flight and leaned over the banisters.

She was almost sure now that she did see something human in the shape on the lower floor, something that bugged the wall and was so like the shadows as to deceive the sharpest eyes.

Was that the tall, slim man, the tiger of the sands, who had tracked her to the house in hopes of wrenching from her the box which she had taken from the detective?

If it was she was nearing her prey.

And at once a hand touched Fuzilie's arm and she looked up into the face of her sister.

"Come back. Some other time," said Aleta, in pleading tones. "You might fail, for you have told me that he carries on his person the death-pin and the secret poison."

"I care not for that!" cried Fuzilie, shaking off the grip. "Go back to your hunchback and let me go straight to the hand that took Prince Peter's life."

Perhaps the something in the shadows down there had ears, for it seemed to stir and the next moment the hot-blooded girl saw that the place was vacant.

"I have lost him through your whining folly!" cried Fuzilie. "I have missed the man who may lie in wait for me with the Black Cord."

She turned again on Aleta whom she pushed against the wall and into whose eyes she glared with the ferocity of a tigress.

"I will follow. He can't have gone far, though I believe he has left the house."

Aleta went back to Boston, while Fuzilie continued down the stairs and passed from the house.

On the street she saw no one, though she looked in every direction, and the lamps showed her figures for a square away.

"Come!" she cried, disappointed. "I have lost him through her. I ought to go back and—No, she is Aleta!" and with this she darted away and in a minute was lost to sight.

Half an hour later, Fuzilie turned up in the alley leading to Fezzam's old den.

Was the tigress still on the trail? Had she recovered the spoor and was she nearing her victim, with the deadly knife still lying along her shapely arm with its needle-like point pricking her tender skin?

She looked up at the window-shuttered wall and thought of the time when she had looked from the one over the door down into the alley where the drunkard lay on her dagger.

She did not knock, but tried the door.

It yielded, proof almost that the old house was deserted, and in another moment she was inside.

The last time she was there she had listened to the astounding trance revelations of little Zulef; but now she was after a human life and did not want to see the wonderful girl.

Fezzam's den with the serpent hidden in the hole in the wall was as well known to Fuzilie as her last sumptuous home at Mrs. Totten's mansion.

She made her way to it, entered the room and stopped.

How still and dark it was.

The ticking of a watch would have been noise amid that silence; but there was none to break it.

"Not here," said Fuzilie aloud. "He did not come to this place. I must have frightened him at Aleta's house and he is not back in the old den."

She had barely spoken when her ears were saluted by a footfall which came from one corner of the darkened room.

The girl turned in that direction and tried to pierce the blackness, but in vain.

She could see nothing, yet she had heard a footfall.

Half a minute later she heard it again, but this time near the mantel where the serpent had its nest.

Surely some one was in the chamber with her.

Bothered, Fuzilie, with the knife still in her hands and her yellow fingers wound vengefully about the hilt, strode toward the mantel and suddenly threw out her hand.

It touched nothing.

She was puzzled.

In another instant, falling back nearly to the door, she stopped again and listened.

Now all was still.

But suddenly from out of the blackness fell a hand which first touched her shoulders and then reached her throat.

She tried to strike, but her hand was dashed aside and she was pushed across the room and forced into a chair which she knew was the one from which Zulef gave her marvelous feats of second sight.

Still she had not seen any one.

The Algerine attempted to spring up, but was forced back again, and now a bluish light danced before her eyes and she saw the outlines of a man.

Fezzam!

There was no doubt of this—the tall, willowy figure was enough to tell her by whom she was confronted, and with the dagger useless, for her hands had been pinioned to the arms of the chair by unseen agency, she could only sit and stare at the shape that came into view and wonder what would be the next play in the death game.

The light increased in intensity until Fuzilie saw the whole room and its contents.

She looked into the yellowish face of Fezzam, into the keen, dancing eyes of doom; saw the long silken fingers which she had a right to fear, and noticed that the figure before her was like that she had vaguely seen among the shadows at Aleta's house.

Yet for all this, the maid did not tremble.

As if her nerves were nerves of iron, she sat bolt upright in the chair and looked.

Her eyes seemed to say: "You have me. Now what of it?" and her mien was such as to impress the man into whose power she had walked that he was dealing with one of the coolest women in the world.

Fezzam, as if proud of the catch, drew off a pace and watched Fuzilie a little while.

"Where is it? Hand it over," he said.

Fuzilie, who felt her heart at that very moment beating against the box mentioned by the old man, did not move.

"You robbed him! You found it, but you have been hiding it. You keep it from your chief. Keta, Fezzam will take the silver box and the blue vial."

"You've killed him," said the bloodless lips of the old man's captive.

"The box," demanded Fezzam.

"I say you killed him. He is dead and by your hand!"

A long silence followed this accusation. The old man moved nearer to Fuzilie, and his hand seemed to touch her face in a sudden sweep.

"I will ask for the last time, girl. Do you want the box taken from your corpse?"

She looked at him, silent still.

He crossed the room by a rapid stride. Fuzilie saw him open the snake's den by taking out the loose brick, and his hand which was thrust into the place for a second was withdrawn with something that writhed and twisted above the dark wrist.

It was the serpent with the flat green head and scintillating eyes.

With this monster in his grasp Fezzam came across the floor again.

The little snake put out its tongue and seemed to mock the girl's utter helplessness; it wrapped itself again and again about Fezzam's arm and now and then tried to kiss his wrinkled face.

"The box or the serpent," said he, advancing upon Fuzilie once more. "I will let you decide what you will do."

Fuzilie tried to move, but she was powerless. Was it the spell of the shining eyes in the flat head, or the hypnotic powers of the man with the serpent?

"You can move your hand to where you have hidden the box," continued Fezzam. "You can reach it, I say, and hand it over to Fezzam."

Why not? Why not surrender the box and then escape to kill him afterward?

This thought darted through the girl's brain like a flash of light.

She could do this and yet be victor.

She might surrender the box and the vial, and yet avenge the death of Prince Peter.

Fuzilie bit her lips half through when this idea fastened itself upon her mind.

It was worth trying. It was freedom, to kill afterward. He could not escape her; no, he should not!

She managed to put her hand up to her bosom.

Her fingers touched the box and she drew it forth.

Old Fezzam's little eyes fairly glittered.

In another second she was holding it out to him as far as she could and he was reaching out for it.

Oh, if she were but free at that supreme moment.

He took the box, laughing one of his cool, demoniac laughs, as it touched his hand, and then he fell back, looking at it as if he had secured a prize worth life itself.

"You got it from him. I knew you had it," he said.

"You killed him," hissed Fuzilie.

"He would not listen to me. He broke the oath of the League of the Sands. He would not obey Fezzam, his chief, and so he became his executioner."

"Villain!"

There was no retort from the old man.

He was busy looking at the box and was turning it over and over in his hands, while the serpent on his arm twisted its greenish coils and seemed to emit death from its little eyes.

"Let me go now, won't you?"

These words came from Fuzilie in the nature of an appeal, the first she had ever made to him.

"I have given you what you wanted. I can do no more. Let me go."

He thrust the box beneath his robe-like garment and came toward her once more.

She saw him uncoil the snake at his wrist and deliberately throw it onto her lap!

With a cry of horror which she could not suppress, Fuzilie recoiled to the depths of the chair and looked at the reptile.

"The snake will carry out the commands of the Black Cord! In a little time his skin will turn black and he will be the Black Cord in reality. I will leave you two alone."

The bluish lights went out and the room became wrapped in darkness.

Fuzilie heard the opening and closing of a door.

She knew that Fezzam was gone and that she was alone with the terrible agent of the Black Cord coiled in her lap, looking perhaps at her just before the deadly strike.

The silence of death fell upon that house in the alley. It reigned everywhere and the wretched girl could hear no sounds at all in the alley outside.

She tried to shriek; in her terror she tried again and again to spring from the torture chair; but all efforts failed and she fell back and waited for the end.

Surely it could not be very long delayed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

PRINCE PETER TURNS UP ONCE MORE.

BROADWAY ZACH, after Hornets's report concerning his adventures at the Jersey end of the trail, seemed very anxious to see some one whose name he did not speak.

The fact that both Prince Peter and Fezzam were back in the city gave the shrewd detective no little concern, and after his interview with Hornets he went out, eager to find a certain person.

One of the freshest of all adventures of the N— street trail was the railroad disaster which occurred when he was linked to Prince Peter by a hand of steel.

It seemed almost incredible that the slick villain should have escaped after what happened that eventful night; but he had no right to discredit Hornets, nor to doubt for a moment that the son of Mother Doss was back in New York.

There were two places at either one of which the sport was likely to make his appearance.

One of these was Mother Doss's house, and the other the Blazer mansion where Fuzilie went after her dismissal from Mrs. Totten's service, and where the detective for awhile was in a trap which had been set for him by Fezzam and Prince Peter together.

Not knowing that Mother Doss was dead, unless he had discovered this by accident, Prince Peter would not be likely to go to her house for the present; and Zach resolved to look for him in the Blazer mansion.

It was a good hiding-place for him and while Hornets had followed Prince Peter from the ferry and had seen him enter a certain house not far from that edifice, it was not likely that he would remain there, as it was not a very secure hiding-place for a man of his stripe.

Zach made his way to the old house, which was empty, and entered.

This he accomplished by a back door and once inside he moved about on tip-toe.

But he waited till midnight and the man did not come.

Prince Peter may have found another place just as safe, and when he quitted the place, the detective thought he would go and take a look at Mother Doss's late abode.

The body of the old woman had been removed by the police and the neighborhood was talking about the strange death.

Everywhere on the street were those who inhabited the tenements, commenting on Mother Doss's sudden taking off, and the disguised detective heard some singular theories as he passed among the crowds.

Access to the room was not debarred to any one and he discovered that the superstitious poor had shunned it from the very first, for the old woman had been considered a freak and not the right person to be met anywhere.

Zach ascended to the room and closed the door after him.

He had not been there since the terrible discovery which he and Doctor Kirby had made.

It was past midnight, and sounds on the street below told him that the people were finally dispersing, and ere long he would have the scene to himself.

He thought of the documents which he had taken from the niche in the wall, and which at that time were safe, to be opened to all when he was at the end of the trail.

Nobody came to the door.

Zach took another look through the room, but after the search that had been made, there was nothing left to find.

He came back to the chair and sat down.

"Mother Doss, are you asleep?" came a voice from just beyond the door.

Zach doubted if he had heard aright.

"Mother Doss," it repeated, "I am back, and your door is locked."

The detective crossed the room and stopped at the door.

He did not know whose face would greet him when he should open the door, for "Mother Doss" was the old hag's name wherever she was known, and the voice sounded strange to him.

"I am back, winged but still alive," said the same voice again, and this time the ferret recognized it.

Prince Peter himself was out there!

Zach turned the key in the lock and opened the door, keeping behind it as he swung it back.

"Ah, I thought I would wait till the street was quiet, for it does no one any good slipping down here when everybody is on the alert looking after other peoples' business."

In came the speaker looking around for Mother Doss, and as the last words were uttered he saw step from behind the door as he shut it, the figure of the detective.

Prince Peter seemed rooted to the floor with supreme amazement.

He neither recoiled nor lifted a hand. Astonishment had paralyzed him.

He only looked at the man with the full grayish beard, who stood in the lamp-light, and at last let a smile play with his lips.

Prince Peter saw that he was caught.

For half a minute he stood there, eying the detective as if he recalled the scene of the wreck and his own part in it, and then he went over to a chair and sat down.

It seemed the only thing he could do, for he saw the cocked revolver that shone in Broadway Zach's hand, and that seemed argument enough.

"You've been lying in wait for me," he said, watching Zach. "You have taken advantage of Mother Doss's absence and played this scurvy trick."

He did not say "death." Perhaps he did not know the truth.

"You did not look for me here, else you would have disappointed me," said Zach at last.

"Wouldn't I have been doing what was right if I had?" was the reply.

"From your stand-point, yes."

Zach glanced at the bandaged arm which Prince Peter carried in a sling and smiled.

"It was your fault," said the sport. "You had to link yourself to me just as if you expected to see me jump from the train."

"You 'killed a dead man' in the depot, eh, Prince?"

"He never felt it," laughed the other. "He was as dead as Caesar when I fired the shot. I had waited for that. But where is Mother Doss? What has become of the old lady?"

"She has removed."

Prince Peter looked round at the scanty furniture in the room and seemed inclined to doubt the detective's word.

"Gone away? Mother Doss?" he repeated, and then his gaze wandered to the print hanging on the wall from behind which Zach had taken the important documents.

It was true; he had not heard of his mother's murder.

"She met with a misfortune," continued Zach, still looking into the cunning eyes of the slickest of fellows. "If you will tell me all, Prince Peter, and tell it so that it will confirm the story of the papers left in the wall yonder—"

The man was on his feet in an instant.

"What, are they in your hands?"

"Suppose there are, what?"

He staggered back to the chair and for a minute was silent.

"What are you going to do with them?" he cried. "Do you intend to blight the life of— Well, never mind whose life just now. Where is Mother Doss and did you force her to surrender the papers to you?"

"She surrendered nothing. I believe she would have defended them with her life."

"I always thought she would."

"But life for her is nothing now."

"What's that?"

"Mother Doss is dead."

This announcement did not startle the listener now as it might have done five minutes sooner.

Prince Peter seemed to lean forward and his eyes got moist.

There was a sudden filling up in the throat, a gasp and then he was outwardly calm again.

"How did she go off? Was she—"

He stopped again as if afraid to finish the question.

"They think so," said Zach. "At least, that is the way it looked, but it was not by the eye."

"Through the blood to the heart? Was there a slight scratch on the skin?"

"There was."

"Where at?"

"On the hand."

"It does there as good as anywhere," he cried. "It makes but little difference where it enters the blood. He came on ahead of me, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"And you have him?"

"No."

Perhaps Prince Peter recalled his struggle with Fezzam in the house behind the trees in Jersey, for he seemed to shudder and his good hand was raised above the chair.

"You know that he is in the city, yet you haven't caught him. You know that he took

Mother Doss's life, yet you say that he is free. You are a fine ferret!"

For once in his life, at least, Broadway Zach winced in the sport's presence.

"Let me go out and look for him," cried Prince Peter. "Let me, crippled as I am, go out and hunt this man down. I have been through all the terrors of the Black Cord. I know who you want."

"But you should have heard the captain's confession."

"What, is that fool at it yet?"

"He has made a more startling one than its predecessors. He has said that he is the guilty one."

"Guilty of what?"

"The murder of Denia Totten."

A derisive smile overspread the face of the man who sat before the ferret resting his maimed member on the arm of the chair, his mother's favorite.

"Did he say that?"

"He did. He said it as coolly as you ever heard a man speak. He confessed it to me."

"Where was he at—in jail?"

"No, at his own house."

Prince Peter broke into a laugh.

"Was the rascal sane?"

"He had been 'scratched.'"

"By what?"

"He said by a pin in old Fezzam's hand."

Prince Peter's face suddenly became serious.

"Let me tell you something, Captain Zebedee. You have read the documents which mother and I hid in the wall yonder. You know all about my life. You know that I did rob Denia Totten of her diamonds and of some papers which were never heard from. I didn't take them to prison with me. They wouldn't let me do that. I hid them all, the stones in Fezzam's care and the papers—that was a secret I kept till I came to America. Captain Kidlace went back to the house on N— street that night to commit a crime. That was his mission. How do I know?"

The man took a long breath and his glance sought the spot on the wall where the portrait hung.

"I guess I needn't keep anything back from you now," he suddenly resumed. "I know that he came back to the house to commit a crime. No matter what he boasts of now. He was armed when he came back. He was met at the door by Rosa, the maid. They went to the parlor, but Mrs. Totten was not there. She had gone to her room. She was killed not in the parlor but in her room after Captain Kidlace's second departure."

"Do you know all this Prince Peter?"

"I do."

"Where were you at the time? Surely to know this you must have been in the immediate vicinity."

Once more Prince Peter arose as if to impress the detective of the importance of what he was saying.

"I was in 'the immediate vicinity,' as you say. I saw the crime committed. I am the living witness of the Frenchman's widow. There, I guess I'll quit for the present," and the lips met and Prince Peter walked to the wall and coolly satisfied himself that the aperture there was empty.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GAME THE ONE-HANDED PLAYED.

ZACH ZEBEDEE saw that the man was not going to continue his story for he had closed his lips like a trap and was as silent as the mysterious Sphinx.

"Very well. We will get to the end of the trail without you," said the ferret. "We will see what is there and if you don't care to tell me what you profess to know, why, we will discover the truth for ourselves."

Mother Doss's prodigal son seemed to wince at this, but he remained silent.

"You will come with me," said Zach rising.

"With you?" cried Prince Peter with a start.

"Why not? You don't expect to remain here do you?"

"Are you going to take me to prison?"

"Yes."

The one-handed sport sprang to his feet and for a moment sent a mad look toward the cool ferret as if, despite his condition, he intended to make a break for liberty and a fight for life.

"Are you going to find the girl?" he suddenly asked.

"Fuzilie?"

"Yes."

"Oh, yes. We must have her, you know."

"Where is she?"

"Somewhere in the city."

"The mission upon which Fezzam sent her was dangerous. She robbed you and got away with the box. She had time to come back to Sandycroft with the prize, but up to the time of my quitting the place she had not shown up. Do you know, Zach Zebedee, that that has a secret of value to you."

"I know all that and that is why we will unearth her."

"If you will let me go; but no, you won't do

that," smiled Prince Peter. "If you would let me go for the time being, I will help you on the trail."

"You will?" and Zach looked at the sport as he stood erect in the room, his eyes eagerly watching his face and his one hand jerking with excitement.

"My mother is dead—murdered as you hint. I feel it. I know the hand that struck her down and I can guess the motive. You dare not let me help you on this hunt. It is something like setting a thief to catch a thief, that's a fact; but if you could come to trust Prince Peter, you will find in him an ally who might be of service to you when you need help most."

The detective looked at the speaker a moment longer and then took off the manacles that bound the wrists together.

"There you are," said he. "Now you are at liberty again."

Prince Peter's lips trembled with thanks for a moment, but he did not utter one.

They passed from the room together and went down to the sidewalk.

"You shall hear from me before dawn. Shall I report here?" asked the one-handed sport.

"In my room!" answered the detective.

They separated on the sidewalk and Zach as he walked off thinking of what he had done looked back and smiled as he saw the figure of Prince Peter vanish in the gaslight round the corner.

Let us follow the man with the maimed hand.

He kept on, keeping in the shadows of the buildings with his coat thrown over his shoulders in such a manner as to hide his condition and before long he reached a door where he rung a bell.

It was opened by a man past whom Prince Peter brushed, and as he entered a room alongside the hall, he heard a voice at sound of which he turned and stood face to face with Captain Kidlace.

Days had passed since they had looked at one another.

Now in the brilliant light of the dandy sport's gas they stood face to face once more and Captain Kidlace who seemed to have recovered from Fezzam's attempt on his life, watched Prince Peter with considerable interest.

"I am back, but, winged, as you may have heard," said the crippled man, dropping into a velvet chair at the table without waiting for an invitation.

"I have heard," replied the captain.

"I am back with the old prison marks still on my back," he went on. "I am the man who escaped from the bagné and who will wear till the coffin incloses him the brand which you saw inflicted in France."

"Have you come hither to tell me all this?" petulantly asked Captain Kidlace.

"No. I was merely refreshing your memory. I have come to say a few words on a subject quite near our hearts. You've been lying again."

The white face of the listener flushed.

These were cool words coming from a man who in strength could not be his equal, for he had but one hand and the other did not seem very eager to take hold of an adversary.

"I have heard all about it. You have confessed to killing Mrs. Totten, the 'Denia' of your life. Were you mad, captain, or did you do it just to throw the shrewd man off the scent?"

Captain Kidlace laughed.

"What do you think I had in view?" he said. "I thought I would take a new tack and save some one else."

"Not old Fezzam?"

"Why should I save him? Look here," and he touched the red mark on his face where the almost deadly pin had scratched him. "Do you think I would save him if I could?"

"You are such a rascal anyhow, captain—you always were—that there's no telling what you won't do. But you declared that you killed Mrs. Totten. Liar!"

In another instant Captain Kidlace was standing erect with his gloved hands clinched and his eyes ablaze.

"Why don't you go on?" said Prince Peter. "Don't you see that I am a crippled bird and not capable of defending myself when it comes to an actual encounter? Go on, I say, and floor me. You never killed that woman though you have confessed such a crime."

Kidlace's look became a stare, but all at once he crossed the room and jerked open a drawer in a desk there.

He came back with something white in his hand.

"Just as I suspected," said Prince Peter. "You take a revolver to kill a crippled bird. Let me tell you something, but by Jove! I won't utter a word till you have taken your seat."

Captain Kidlace sat down, the revolver gripped in his hand.

"I repeat that you never touched the woman that night. You may have gone back to the house with evil in your heart, evil which Rosa from her infatuation for you stood ready to assist; but you didn't see Denia. She was up stairs in her room at the time. She was not killed till later."

There was no reply.

"You have been thunderstruck by a paper which Rosa says she found beneath the dead woman's hand."

"It was the devil's work," cried the captain.

"Perhaps. The detective found when he came a paper with a line scrawled across it and no one could read it."

"Rosa says she did that."

"She did. I saw her, captain."

"You?" cried Captain Kidlace almost dropping the revolver.

"Yes. The other writing, the lines which might have hung you, was written by one who wanted to get even."

"I know, by the hand that killed the widow."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. That infamous writing was the work of Fezzam, the head of the Black Cord."

A smile seemed to play for a moment with Prince Peter's mouth and he leaned toward the captain as he spoke:

"You miss the mark," said he. "You accuse the old demon of something of which he is not guilty. For once you have missed your mark, but in the name of Heaven why did you tell Zach Zebedee that you killed her?"

"I wanted to throw him off the track I say."

"But you have done nothing of the kind. You were told to your face that you lied."

"He was liable to turn on a friend of mine."

"Upon the girl, Rosa? She's better than you, captain; but not a great deal. You say that Fezzam left on the table the writing intended to stretch your neck. Well, he did nothing of the kind. I did that myself."

There was a start and a look of unbelief on the captain's face and he watched the features before him for a moment like a wild man.

"You?" he suddenly cried.

"Yes. When you stood by and saw me brandish I swore eternal vengeance, and said that if it took years I would get even with you for your smiles while the red-hot iron burnt into my flesh across the water. I was in the house that night. I was there by invitation of Prince Peter myself. You came back, but did not find her. I saw the shadow of the murderer; I stood concealed and witnessed the crime, then left on the table the writing against you which Rosa found in time, and which she took up, and left in its place a scrawl which the detectives could not make out."

"You intended to send me to the noose, did you?"

"I did!"

Prince Peter was really laughing and the eyes of Captain Kidlace seemed to start from his head.

"Now I am going off and if you care to confess again—you are good at such things—don't forget to put in what I have told you here, for then you will have told the truth, and the city may believe the greatest liar of the age."

The man walked coolly toward the door and Captain Kidlace could but gaze at him in astonishment.

Prince Peter stopped at the door and looked back.

"They'll get you into the trap pretty soon," cried Kidlace.

"I'm in it now. I've been caught—caught to-night. I've sat in the detective's den and talked with him."

"With Zach Zebedee?"

"Yes—with the man who deprived me of a hand."

"And didn't you try to kill him?"

"I did not."

"Fool, then go out and be hanged for your clemency!"

Prince Peter walked into the hall undisturbed and thence to the street.

"That man is dangerous, since I know what he did the night of the crime. I don't wonder that he wanted to get even with me, for if it had not been for my part in the French transaction he might have two good hands to-night instead of but one."

Out on the street Prince Peter seemed to reflect a moment and then started off.

He nearly crossed the city, avoiding those inclined to look twice at a man flitting through the shadows with a hand missing, as they could see by the sling, and when he came to the mouth of an alley he stopped and looked down it for a moment.

"Why not? I'm strong enough to face the old devil, and if necessary pay him back for his work."

Prince Peter went on and stopped at a door which he tried with the good hand.

It would not open.

He drew back and seemed to pull himself together, and as no one was in sight he threw himself against the portal and it fell in, carrying him along with it.

It did not take Prince Peter long to recover from the attack on the door, and he recovered in a dark room.

The place was close and had a fetid smell.

He struck a match and started across the room.

"If I find him in advance of the ferret, the State may be cheated," he said aloud to himself.

"If fate will but show me the old wretch who has darkened a hundred lives, I will thank her

the rest of my life, even if the law shortens it with a noose."

The door which he now saw seemed to resist like the front one had; but Prince Peter did not stand upon ceremony, but threw his whole weight against it and burst it in.

His match went out as he fell headlong into a room where stygian darkness prevailed.

As he picked himself up he heard a sound which caused him to stagger back and strike another match on the wall.

"Some one is here," cried Prince Peter, as his eyes grew somewhat accustomed to the place. "That was a groan and—Heavens! what is this?"

The match had shown him the figure of a woman in a chair.

The face was seamed with unmentionable agony; the eyes were starting from their sockets and the hands seemed to sink into the arms of the chair.

It was a picture of torture such as the sport had never seen before.

But there was that about the face which drew another cry from Prince Peter's throat.

He had recognized the prisoner of the chair. It was Fuzilie, the girl who loved him—the Algerine maid who had been sent after the silver box and its deadly contents.

Dead in Old Fezzam's den! Imprisoned in a chair from which there was no escape; killed by some unseen agency!

Prince Peter rushed forward and with his one hand tore the girl loose; then he dragged her toward a couch beyond a curtain and next thing lit the gas.

As he came back he slipped on something that seemed imbued with life on the floor, and when he looked down he saw a reptile in the throes of death!

Then he turned once more to the girl and as her eyes opened he gave utterance to an ejaculation of joy.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FINDING OF FEZZAM.

BROADWAY ZACH knew nothing of all this.

He had parted with Prince Peter with a desperate move in view for, detective like, he saw that he was at the end of the trail, and that to reap the reward of his work he would have to act quickly and meet, if he could, a man as desperate as any that ever killed, and a fiend in human shape.

He knew from Hornets's last telegram and from the story told by the boy-Vidocq in person that Fezzam the master spirit of the Black Cord was in the city.

He was aware of the fact that this man was after the silver box which Fuzilie had taken from him by her tigerishness, and that he would have to work fast if he expected to carry out his plans.

After quitting Prince Peter, whom he left to go where he pleased, he turned into another part of the city. He might have gone to the den in the alley where he and not the Prince would have saved Fuzilie in the nick of time; but he chose to look elsewhere for the man he wanted.

The slaying of Mother Doss told Zach that the old man was hunting for the documents which he had discovered in the old woman's room. He would not return to the scene of this crime; he would not be likely to go back to the old den in the alley; but there was another place where he might hide and this was the very place with which the ferret was familiar.

Zach Zebedee reached a quiet street as the nearest clock was sending forth its tones, and the Blazer house loomed up before him in its bleakness, as the recollections of his former visit to it came back, causing him to shudder.

He passed this place, and turned down an alley not far off.

There at the mouth of the alley stood an empty house, which was also known to him, for it was into this place that he lauded when he had crept through the underground tunnel after quitting the cellar beneath the house where Fuzilie was in hiding at the time of his capture by the Black Cord.

Zach went to the cellar of the house now visited by him.

He found there the hole from which he had emerged, and after taking a survey of it, he wormed himself into the place and crept through its narrowness.

It was a long crawl in the dark, a good deal of twisting and much exertion; but at last he came out on the cellar in which he had once been confined.

Not a sound reached his ears as he stood in the darkness and listened for a clue.

He advanced to the door, opened it and crept up a flight of moldy steps.

In the room above, as dark as the one he had just left, he stopped, and then felt his way along the wall.

Presently a light ahead caused him to halt.

The Blazer house was inhabited. Some one besides himself was there, and he listened with all ears as he went to a door beyond which the light was.

The ferret felt that he had discovered the object of his creep through the narrow tunnel.

The keyhole had been filled, but the light came

from over the cramped transom of the door, and he reached up and caught the cross-piece.

In another moment he had drawn himself up along the door, and his eyes were at a rent in the paper tacked over the transom.

The room beyond was inhabited, and as the detective looked down he saw a man seated at a table looking at a paper which was discolored and broken in many places.

The face was not upturned, but this was not needed to make recognition sure.

Fezzam was in that room—Fezzam, the head of the Black Cord, with his parchment face and his dangerous hands, while on the table at his side rested a silver box open, displaying the deadly vial.

Zach watched him a moment as he hung along the door, and saw his finger trace out something on the paper before him.

He knew that a movement on his part might lose him his prey, for one scratch of the pin, one drop of the deadly liquid in the master's eye, and all would be over.

A thousand ideas seemed to whirl through the shadow's brain while he watched the man of the plot.

Fezzam wore his robe as when he stood before Fuzille and threw the snake into her lap; his gleaming eyes as he read the contents of the paper seemed to dance, and the ferret looked on with varying emotions.

He had found the prey, the prize of the game; he had reached at last the end of the mystery, and knew that he was looking down at the hand which killed the woman who had dared to cut loose from the infamous League by which her husband had been murdered.

For several moments after he had dropped to the floor Zach Zebedee debated the situation in his mind.

More than once he moved toward the door and pulled himself back.

All at once he heard the shuffling of a chair and then footsteps beyond the door.

Had the old man moved and was he about to quit the room?

Zach drew alongside the portal and waited. Seconds were hours to his soul as they were told off by the flying hand of time.

The knob turned after a brief spell.

The detective saw the door open and a ray of light streamed into the hall and almost across his feet.

In another instant the tall figure of Fezzam rose before him.

It looked taller than ever to the motionless man in the shadows at the wall.

Suddenly a cry was forced from the Algerine's lips and he went back into the lighted room like a rocket and was thrown against the wall there with the eager hands of the detective of Gotham at his throat.

Nothing could have resisted the ferret at that moment.

He looked into the bulging eyes of Fezzam as he held him against the wall and kept down the struggling hands which tried to get into a slit in the darkish gown.

It was in vain. For once the man from the desert had met his match, and as the hands of Zach tightened, sinking deeper and deeper into his captive's throat, the old face underwent changes till it was almost black and the hands fell benumbed at their owner's sides.

Fezzam looked at a pair of steel manacles when he recovered in the chair at the table where he had been found.

When he raised his eyes he encountered the detective, whose hand seemed to toy with a silver box in which nestled a bluish vial half-filled with a strange-looking liquor.

The old Algerine said nothing. Zach pulled from his pocket a Black Cord and laid it on the table, then beside it he dropped a pin, and looked at Fezzam.

"They're all there, eh, Fezzam?" asked the detective.

The dark lips twitched, and the eyes, as they fell upon the emblems of the League, seemed to catch fire.

"This one killed Mrs. Totten; this one Mother Doss," and Zach's hand alternately touched the Black Cord and the pin.

There was no answer, only the lips of the man who was watching him seemed to meet in new resolution.

"You won't talk, Fezzam. Do you know that you have been betrayed by a paper in my hands—the one you did not find in Mother Doss's house? Do you know that Prince Peter is ready to tell it all—that Captain Kidlace's lies will not save any neck; that the girl, Fuzille, will do her part and tell the secrets of the Cord as she knows them?"

At mention of Fuzille's name the old man seemed to start.

His lips parted at last.

"There is no Fuzille!" said he, with a grin.

Zach made no reply, but wrapped the three deadly things in bits of paper and put them away.

As he rose he looked at Fezzam of Algiers, and saw his face grow white; then the figure of the old man moved, started from the chair and he towered in the middle of the room like an oak.

"One of his tricks!" cried Zach, as he darted toward him, and as he threw out his hand the Algerine reeled away and fell heavily against the wall.

There stood in a narrow place protected by bars of iron, a man whose gaze seemed riveted upon those very bars which deprived him of his liberty.

He was tall and old; indeed, he looked like one who had entered the second century of his existence, and as he put forth his hand those who were watching him from a distance saw that it was dark and bony.

The next morning those who went to this cell and looked in, found there a younger-looking man.

The old one seemed to have renewed his youth in the silent watches of the night, and the watch who cried out that the old man had escaped and that a younger one had taken his place, was laughed at by a smooth-faced person who came down the prison corridor.

"It's still Fezzam of Algiers," said this man. "He is playing a trick—one to which he holds the key but it won't save him."

The door was swung back and the inmate of the cell taken out.

He did look like a young man, but the clothes he wore certainly belonged to Fezzam.

"Look between his shoulders," said a voice, at which the prisoner started.

They tore down his garments; they exposed in the garish light of day the darkish skin between the shoulder-blades, and the man who had spoken before cried out:

"See! There is the sign of the Black Cord. See the cord and its knots which are traced on the skin of all who ever belonged to the League. Whatever face that man wears, he is Fezzam of Algiers all the same!"

The speaker turned and walked away, and as he did so he exposed a bandaged arm which he carried in a sling, and this told that he was Prince Peter.

Three weeks later, as Hornets sat alone in Zach Zebedee's den, some one rapped at the door and the boy's "Come in, sir," brought face to face with him a man who glided across the room and asked for the detective.

This personage wore gloves, and had a pallid face which wore a slight scratch across the cheek.

"He's not in just now, Captain Kidlace," said Hornets. "Take a seat and spin another yarn about the killing of the lady on N— street. You haven't made a confession for twenty-four hours, I guess."

In an instant the face of the detective's visitor became crimson, and as he came toward the cool, grinning Hornets, he was seen to shut his hands in a spasm of rage.

"Don't put yourself to any unnecessary trouble, captain," said the boy, as he dived one hand into a drawer which he had opened. "You don't have to make another confession, but I thought that as you have been in the business you might like to continue in it."

Captain Kidlace slunk away and threw back a look of madness from the door, then shut the portal with a bang and vanished.

That night there was a secret wedding in New York, and the parties stole from the room where they were made one and sought out a handsome mansion in the heart of the city.

And Rosa, looking into the face of the man to whom she had linked her life, must have felt that she was still the slave of Captain Kidlace, as when she tried to save his life in the parlor of Denia Totten.

Time came when an old man—a wretch of many crimes—unsealed his lips just before death, and told how his hand had taken the life of the handsome woman who had repudiated the Black Cord; how he had stolen into Mrs. Totten's house and snuffed out a life with the deadly poison of the silver box.

He told, too, how he intended to fix the crime upon Captain Kidlace, whom he never liked; how he left the box and the vial in the house, for a purpose which he never made clear in his confession; and how he threw into Fuzille's lap the deadly serpent of his native lands.

Time came, too, when this old man lay dead on the stones of a prison cell, and when Fuzille, looking down into the staring eyes, realized that never more would they "spell" her in the alley den, nor would the dark hands throw the green reptile at her again.

She was free at last!

The skill of the tireless ferret had cleared up the mystery; he had hunted down the guilty, and when she turned from the scene at the prison she joined a young man outside who carried his arm in a sling.

No matter if there were scars of crime on Prince Peter's back; no matter if he had served in the baguette, this fact did not lessen the love of the Algerine; and she went out into the sunlight with him, and Zach the detective watched the pair with a curious smile on his face.

Hornets often recalls his adventures in Jersey during the hunt for the guilty, and whenever he passes a certain man on the street, which he

often does, he turns and looking at him, says to himself:

"It was a tough lesson for you, Prince Peter. It cost you a good hand; but the girl stuck to you through thick and thin, and that ought to be reward enough."

Zach Zebedee was inclined to regard the N— street mystery one of his greatest cases, and from what we have told of it, the reader will doubtless agree with him.

Certainly it was a case which added new laurels to the fame of the Broadway Spotter.

THE END.

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